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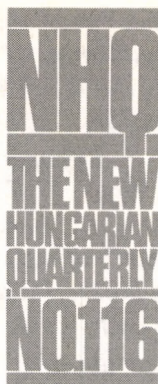
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NQ116



Notepad

In the last issue, the 115th, the usual advertisement of future articles was accompanied by a brief announcement that the format of the paper would change. Truth to tell this was an understatement indeed. The format will change, but so will the paper, the typography and the number of pages. The previous—usual—224 pages will be reduced to a hundred and twenty-eight. There will be no illustrations in colour, let alone special supplements, but more in black and white. Thirty years ago the printers imported Centaur moulds from England, expressly for us. That lead typeface will give way to photoset Times New Roman. Gilbert Lesser, the American designer of the Equus poster, produced a new cover for us.

New technology combined with the need to save on costs prompted these changes. The painfully long six months between the delivery of MSS and the publication date—which we have often complained about—will be reduced to two. The typographic changes should make the appearance more lively; larger pages and smaller margins will make the quantitative reduction much smaller than the loss in the number of pages suggests and the much smaller weight will considerably reduce postage. All this means that, unusually for our times, the selling price will actually be reduced to \$ 3 an issue (\$ 12 for an annual subscription) or the equivalent in any other currency.

The other aspect of the changes refers to contents. Events are moving fast in Hungary nowadays, the pace of change has accelerated considerably. Hungary has moved much closer to the centre of attention of the media. Many more journalists, foreign correspondents of the press and broadcasting stations are present in the country and hardly a day passes without some Hungarian event making the headlines. This makes it incumbent upon us to provide more background information and comment, placing events in their context. Pluralism means that it is our duty to manifest the varied hues of the political spectrum.

As the world is aware, people expect that the end of the one-party state and democracy means that their lives will improve. Greater freedom is part of this; it was indeed thanks to economic bankruptcy that the one-party state was forced to abandon some of its bastions—a bankruptcy largely caused by the restrictions on individual initiative and property. George Walden, commenting in Encounter, quoted Alexander Pope: “ ‘For forms of government let fools contest; / What’er is best administer’d is best,” going on to argue that “what we are witnessing is not a moral rebirth of nations but the triumph of managerial ethic.” Seen from Budapest, things look a bit different. The impasse, which is the fruit of forty years of mismanagement, is not merely economic but also moral. It follows that although the managerial ethic is indeed a requisite of recovery, an operative economy necessarily has to be based on social and moral renewal and cultural reconstruction. Such processes will also be reflected in the pages of the paper.

We are not optimists. We know that retrogressive forces exist and are at work. The rearguard of the one-party state fights to hold its positions. But we are not pessimists either. Attentive observers keep their eye on new forces showing growing viability. By the time of publication it is to be hoped that electioneering will already be under way in Hungary, based on the new electoral law, the first free elections after a gap of over forty years. We will endeavour to provide objective in-depth information about all that will happen hereafter.

Zoltán Halász

Ceaușescu and the miners István Hosszú's story

The big colliery strike in the Zsil (Jiu) Valley broke out on August 1st 1977.

The immediate cause of the unrest was that the government had abolished a number of benefits without consulting the miners. Working hours were altered: before the strike we worked six hours a day—this concession had been proposed by the Party itself—but shortly before the strike the eight hour day was restored. Then the age of retirement of miners was changed from 50 to 55. The pension bonus, known as third category pension, for disabled miners was done away with overnight—those affected had simply been notified that they were not going to get it in the future, without any medical examination or consideration of each case. And so on and so forth, I should add that even without the taking back of these concessions the situation was such that adding to it meant taking a serious risk. Higher tension was simply unbearable and triggered off spontaneous resistance.

The sudden movement spread like wild fire to almost all the Zsil Valley collieries. Lupény (Lupeni) was the centre of the movement. There trouble with miners was nothing new. In 1929 it was there that the famous strike broke out, which was then drowned in blood by the volleys of the gendarmerie.

Our mine, the Dulzsa pit, was one of the few exceptions. Quiet reigned. When, on the 1st, I went to work I heard this and that about a strike at Lupény and things like that—but I didn't quite believe that something serious was going on. Only when I got to the sports ground and saw the excitement there and the to-ing and fro-ing—one helicopter landing, another taking off—I began to understand that this was no joking matter. In normal circumstances in the Zsil Valley helicopters are rare birds, especially those of the Central Committee, and those were theirs all right—well, something is really happening here!

I got to the mine; excitement everywhere, running around—but not a bit of authentic information. The bosses of course first tried to deny, and then to interpret in their own way, the news. They did all they could to divert the men's attention from the events just in case we wanted to join the Lupény strike. And nobody bothered to answer my questions.

"Alright", I say to my foreman "I'll go over to Lupény then to see what's going on."

"You're not going anywhere, you're off on your shift", he says. And he threatened me too. He'd had enough trouble with me as it was, if I went now he'd do this and he'd do that.

"Look, Costica", I say to him, "I am not interested in your threats. I am going because that's my place".

And I left him. I walked to the bus stop, got on a bus and went to Lupény.

The Dulzsa pit is some 20 kilometres from Lupény—but it wasn't an easy journey because the whole Zsil Valley was off to Lupény. The miners had obtained lorries, and diverted buses and trains, and flooded to the centre of the strike from everywhere.

It was nine in the morning by the time I got into the town. A huge teeming crowd. At a modest estimate some 30–35,000 thousand people must have collected in Lupény. I don't want to exaggerate, so I'll say just this many. This huge tide of people all converged on the main yard of the pit. That's where the strikers met and held their mass meeting.

What struck me the moment I got off the bus and was swept forward by the huge crowd towards the mine was the Securitate, Securitate, Securitate, Securitate—ALL OVER the bloody place. It wasn't hard to spot them wearing their dark glasses and the other inventive methods they used to disguise themselves so conspicuously. They shuffled about in the crowd with their tails between their legs or stood about with heads inclined leaning against the wall, passively and scared, waiting to see what would happen. They were totally impotent. The strike broke out so spontaneously and suddenly, that it took the authorities completely unprepared.

The workers and miners were as transformed: excited beaming faces everywhere, everyone full of liberated activity! I was very, very much surprised by what was in front of my eyes.

The huge yard of the pithead overflowed with people. They stood on piles of timber, on the roofs of the concrete buildings, they were all over the mining machinery, some of them hanging on the pipes and the branches of trees. The strike leadership had taken their place on the flat roof of the concrete pit-top—everyone wanted to get close but of course they could not as it was impossible to move. Not to mention the noise. People shouted in chorus. “Lupény ’29!”, and you could even hear voices shouting, “They ought to be skinned alive!”, or “They ought to be hanged by their tongues!”—but in fact they did not touch a soul. True, the Securitate did not dare come into the yard, they were scared that the crowd might get into a lynching mood. And wherever one or two of them were recognised, people spat on them but they did not strike blows at them.

What most surprised me was the references to the Hungarian revolution. I’d never heard things like that before and now the air was full of shouts like, “What we have to do is what the Hungarians did in ’56!” and not just in Hungarian but in Rumanian too, with Rumanians shouting! This brought home to me that the embers of the Hungarian revolution had remained alive under the ashes, deep in the souls of the Zsil Valley miners, for over twenty years, never expressed but still living as a pure ideal and example.

I walked round the colliery looking for somewhere I could get into the yard. I knew none of the strike leaders, I was hardly able to see from a distance who those men were who moved about at the centre but I was able to make out as much from the positioning of the loudspeakers that they were on the roof of the pit-top.

I walked round the fenced administrative building and finally at the back I did find a locked gate. I climbed over the huge metal structure, and there I was right near the pit-top, where the action was.

Then I slowly discovered the details. The best part of Monday was taken up by the leadership and the whole crowd compiling and phrasing as 14 points the demands of the miners. The three leaders, M. Constantin Dobre, a miner, Jurca, an engineer, and a woman, one of the activists of the youth organization, took turns in reading out the points one by one into the microphone so that anyone could make their contribution and the strikers could weight up and thoroughly discuss every sentence and every word, and it took quite some time before the final text took shape. The first demand concerned the reduction once again of the working hours from 8 to 6 hours for those underground. The second called for the restoration of the retirement age of 50. The third point demanded that the retirement bonus for disabled miners should be reintroduced. The fourth point demanded that the press, radio and television should cover the miners’ strike in detail and objectively. The fifth called for restraints on corruption in health care—that was a very important issue as corruption prevailed and was spreading like cancer in all walks of Rumanian life and had almost completely paralysed the health service. I can’t recall the exact order of the points now but I can still recall some of the items: we demanded the improvement of the provisioning with food for the mining region; we demanded that the members of the miners’ families, wives and the school leaving children, be given jobs; we demanded the building of a new clinic because the old one had become incapable of coping with population growth, especially if you consider the very high rate of accidents—and so on, all the way, in this spirit.

At this point I should perhaps add a word of explanation. I must emphasise that this strike started spontaneously, without any previous planning or direction. The “leaders” were the leaders of the strike in the sense that they took responsibility afterwards for what had broken out without them anyway, they placed themselves at the head of a process that was already under way. All the same they did a great deal. Because they understood that some sort of direction, control and braking system was needed, otherwise emotions would have bolted and the movement would have ended up in senseless bloodshed. They were men and women who realised that not only the opportunities were great but the risks too. In the last resort even a Russian intervention, and in its wake a national tragedy, might occur, but what was more likely was that the Rumanian authorities would use arms and all of us would be shot, dashing all our most beautiful hopes—and then these splendid men turned up and putting aside all

personal considerations kept events within the bounds of responsible and sober politics. They tried to carry our cause to bloodless victory. This is how they had become leaders, on the basis of their own honest intentions and the trust of the masses that had risen.

If my memory serves me right, Ilie Verdet and his party arrived on the scene already on Monday. Verdet was a Secretary to the Party's Central Committee and the Chairman of the State Council, and incidentally some kind of relative of Ceaușescu's. Furthermore, he was specially put in charge of the Zsil Valley collieries by the C. C.—in a word, he was our top boss with full powers. In later years he lost much of his power, he lost favour and was demoted to a mere minister, lately he was relieved even of that post—however, then he was still one of the great lords of the land. He was accompanied by Constantin Babalu, the then Minister for Mining Affairs, and joined in Lupény by the local Party secretary, Clement Negruc and Ginea, the Mayor of Lupény. Verdet thus arrived with a big fuss. He turned up at the colliery as one who would now put things to right—and the striking miners simply put him under arrest together with the other three gents. Arrested them right and proper, just as it is prescribed in the good book. Right under the nose of the Securitate—they just stood there showing their impotence, not being able to do anything about it.

That was a fantastic experience which taught us all a great deal. You could see quite clearly when the workers exploded into real collective action the Securitate was impotent. They could only deal with isolated individuals. I'll go even further, faced with individuals they could only dominate the cowards.

Verdet was told pointblank: You came here to negotiate? We won't talk to you. You've misled the whole Party, you've misled the whole state leadership, and you have lied to us all the time! We've got nothing to talk to you about.

It was clear even to me that the strike leaders wanted to talk to Ceaușescu himself, they wanted to make sure that the General Secretary would come down in person and talk to them.

A small guard house was chosen as the temporary prison of the four captives—they were taken there through the dense crowd by a guard made up of miners. The guards really did all they could to protect them from the anger of the workers but naturally their efforts weren't entirely successful. Verdet's clothes were torn a little on the way and here and there a man jumped out of the crowd and landed him one if he could reach him, so the small band got to the guard-house in a pretty battered state.

This log cabin was so small that it could barely hold the four of them. The miners smashed the window with an axe-handle so they got enough air to breathe. It was a rather hot summer, and so the prisoners could hear the people cursing and swearing at them outside. All they got in the days of their captivity was water and some of that black bread which we ate too. "There, taste it, that's the kind of bread you feed us with!"—it was like mud, barely risen, stodgy sticky stuff.

Constantin Babalu was released later—he'd been appointed Minister for Mining not long before, so he could hardly have been briefed properly on the the miners' conditions and could not personally be blamed for them. But the other three stayed—the three scared prisoners squatted there on the floor of the cabin day and night, munching the dog's dinner called bread and listening in terror to the frightening noise made by the huge rally.

Ceaușescu was on the seaside just then at Neptune, in his splendid summer resort and was just then negotiating with an American delegation, a fairly high-ranking one. Something of a scandal occurred there at the time as well: populous western package tours had arrived and they needed the space so the native holidaymakers were simply moved out of their rooms without any explanation, just put out on the street. A characteristic event: the Rumanian regime is capable of anything to get western currency. Now these Rumanian holidaymakers left without a roof over their head in their indignation made some noise and improvised a demonstration right under the windows of the General Secretary's holiday home—but that of course was the sort of thing the Securitate could cope with.

In that situation the General Secretary was informed that the Zsil Valley miners expected him. The Securitate filled him in on the details explaining to him that his presence in Lupény was indispensable and urgent. However, Ceaușescu refused to believe that the situation was

really that serious. Anyway, how could he leave the American delegation just like that, and at a time at that when the whole town was in uproar and demonstrating against him? He thought the Zsil Valley could wait, and he put off his departure from hour to hour.

At the same time the patience of the strikers was running out. When the General Secretary did not turn up, it was decided that a guard of eight men should take the prisoner Verdet to the Cultural Centre of the town from where the Neptune resort could be called on a direct line: let Verdet talk to Ceaușescu. The escort was instructed not to permit any chatter. Verdet would be allowed to say no more than a bare sentence, that the General Secretary must come, and the conversation was over.

"Comrade Ceaușescu please come promptly because there is much trouble", that's all Ilie Verdet said on the phone, his voice still distorted by fear.

Of course the General Secretary was not satisfied with that much and demanded further details of explanation, but the leader of the guard snatched the receiver from Verdet's hand. They could still hear Ceaușescu's voice shouting, "Verdet! Verdet!!!" but he got no answer. The miner hung up.

"That's all!"

Ceaușescu finally grasped that Verdet was not a free man, and that he must leave at once, that the Securitate reports were not exaggerated: the situation was totally serious. He left the American delegation high and dry and took to his helicopter which never stopped till they got to Petrozsény (Petrojeni). There he and his hurriedly composed entourage boarded black cars, that is how they reached Lupény. Ion Pacepa was with him, he later defected to the West, and three other bosses who happened to be at hand. He arrived on the third day of the strike, on a Wednesday, early in the afternoon, after one or before two.

Later the Rumanian press reported on the event as "a friendly working visit", distorting the story down to the last minute details, as is their custom.

To tell the truth the reception was really friendly—a bit too friendly in fact. At the suggestion of the leaders the strikers had agreed that they would greet the General Secretary on his arrival with the slogans: "Ceaușescu and the miners!" and "Ceaușescu and the people". As soon as he reached the concrete pit-top the crowd of assembled miners would proclaim him an "honorary miner".

I think that this meant that the miners right at the first moment scored an own goal which spoilt their chances from the start. In this totally acute situation all the General Secretary could trust in was that which was left, the remainder of his personal authority. It was only that he could base his tactics on—and now we had given him the chance to do so. Considering the balance of power we had a real chance but we made a mess of it all because of our naivety. "Ceaușescu and the miners!"—that gesture included the entertained illusion that the General Secretary actually meant well and it was only those working under him, men of the second line, who were rascals and rogues, who misled even the well-meaning General Secretary. I'm sorry to say but our leaders, these really clever and decent people, with real guts, were pathetically naive.

When they turned up the black motorcade wanted to drive through the crowd intending to come as far as pit top—but that was impossible, the dense crowd could not possibly have provided a right of way even had they wanted to. They had to get out of their cars at the gate of the yard and walk between the lines of the strikers cheek by jowl with the rebellious men—it wasn't much of a distance but it must have seemed very long to Ceaușescu at the time. Seeing his face was a memorable experience, he looked very surprised, indeed frightened. He kept on shifting his glance and you could tell he did not believe his eyes. Yes, there was fear on his face: he felt himself to be in a trap. He heard the crowd cheering him, the whole valley resounded with their shouts: "Ceaușescu and the miners!" "Ceaușescu and the people!"—but he knew all the same what the score was. He must have felt like facing a dog that wags its tail and bares its teeth. The General Secretary's hairs must have been standing on end.

The strike leaders did not go to meet him, they waited on the pit-top roof, close to the microphones. After some difficulty Ceaușescu at last got up on the roof, the leaders shook hands with him, there was tremendous applause and cheering, and then, without warning, on

the spur of the moment, he was proclaimed honorary miner—you must have seen how confused the General Secretary looked!

Constantin Dobre spoke to the miners—he spoke very well, wonderfully well, determined and in a bold voice, with perfect empathy for the men. One could tell precisely what a fantastic impression was made by every sentence he said. After this formal act of introduction he asked the miners what they proposed: should he call upon Comrade Ceaușescu to speak or should the miners' demands be read to him first. The crowd's response was unanimous:

"Let him listen to our demands! Let him listen to our demands!" Then the 14 points were read out. No commentary was added, they were just read into the microphones. The General Secretary listened in silence. Then Dobre spoke again:

"Now that we've had our say, the floor belongs to the favourite son of the Rumanian nation, Comrade Ceaușescu!"

The favourite son of the Rumanian nation took the hand-held microphone and began to speak. His voice was very hoarse, his first words could hardly be heard. He began by saying that "you really shouldn't have done this, Comrades", and "it should not have been done in this way, because this brings shame on the Rumanian nation"—and so on. It was pretty muddled, I had the feeling throughout that he'd lost the thread of what he wanted to say, that he kept coming back to where he started in his confusion, groping his way in the dark. He was completely flustered: sometimes he addressed us as "Comrades", sometimes as "you", at others using the familiar of the second person plural—he seemed unable to make up his mind which form of address to choose.

He must have felt, in the event, that his words of reproach met with an unfriendly reception. He did give it up, and pulling himself together a bit, he turned to the specific issues: the demands. He didn't go through all the 14 points, he bypassed the more sensitive ones, and instead concentrated mainly on the first point, the issue of the six hour day, because apparently he believed that in this connection he could waffle and bluster.

"Comrades", he said, "I just don't understand this whole business. It was precisely the highest organs of the Party, you will recall, that worked out the plan of the 6-hour working day, and it was not so long ago that precisely the Central Committee of the Party proposed that in view of the difficult working conditions underground working hours should be reduced to six hours. And this was done. And who were those then who requested that the 8-hour day be reintroduced? It was you! So what are you complaining about now?"

He received a prompt reply:

"It wasn't us! It was the thieves, the bandits who did!"

The whole yard was in uproar, the outraged miners shouted in unison: "It wasn't us, it was the thieves, the bandits!!!"

It needed Dobre to calm them down somehow so that the General Secretary might continue his speech.

"All right then, let us discuss the issue, Nicolae Ceaușescu says. Let it be the subject of negotiations. But let us talk it over like sensible men. If you keep on shouting, it won't get us anywhere."

And then he launched into an explanation that it was impossible for the whole Zsil Valley to return to the 6-hour day all at once. That would create insoluble problems of organization. And anyway the present workforce was not large enough for a 6-hour day. Just now when the economy needed coal so desperately a demand like that was not realistic and could not be satisfied. Therefore what he suggested was that for the time being Lupény alone should return to the 6-hour day. Then, later, gradually, step by step, the other mines in the Zsil Valley could do the same.

Everyone was aware that this was contemptible trimming, the aim of the General Secretary was to disrupt unity, to disarm the workers of the Lupény colliery—he could then deal with the others one way or another. The miners understood and did not fall for the trick. "Six hours from tomorrow, throughout the Zsil Valley! We will not return to work until then! SIX HOURS, AS FROM TOMORROW! SIX HOURS EVERYWHERE!"

Now this made Ceaușescu fly off the handle. It was unusual and unacceptable to him that

workers dare contradict him to his face. And there in his rage he made a big mistake—a grave mistake it was. He behaved as if he were in the Central Committee, or at home in his palace. He forgot himself and overshot the mark:

“Is that so? You won’t go back to work?” and he repeated that twice—“So you don’t take up work? You DO NOT WANT TO GO BACK TO WORK?! All right then”, he says, “then there are other ways of talking to you!”

I think we were aware that the mountains all around were full of soldiers and Securitate units armed to the teeth. But even so! And anyway there was something rather funny and strange about the situation: his slaves up in the surrounding hills with arms pointed at us but he, Ceaușescu, standing there in our midst. But there was another circumstance we mustn’t forget about: there at that time we were not afraid. No one could talk to us like that then. Indeed, the General Secretary very much misjudged the power situation, and that was a gross mistake on his part, which could even have cost him his life.

After the General Secretary’s words all hell broke loose. Within a moment the striking miners turned into a revolutionary mass. Savage shouting exploded from the angered crowd.

“Boo! Boo! Boo! Down with him! Out with him! Away! Let the shithead perish!” And this went on in a loud rhythmic chant for at least three minutes, unstoppably.

At this critical moment it was again Constantin Dobre who took the reins in hand. He cast a sombre look at the General Secretary, took the microphone from him, and all he said in a low voice was this, “I am talking now”. And then he spoke to the masses.

With a second effort—I said that he really understood the language of the workers, he knew how to deal with them, so with a fresh attempt he managed to quieten the crowd and restore order once again.

“You lacked the patience to hear him out, to discover what the General Secretary really wanted to say to you.”

And with that he gave another chance to Ceaușescu to correct himself and try another and new tone.

By then the General Secretary had switched from venom to terror again. He understood that he’d made a serious mistake and that he’d placed himself in a situation where his life was in danger; those who stood close to him could see that his face was as white as a sheet. He tried to correct himself, but he could not really regain his composure.

“And now I’ll give the floor to the General Secretary again”, Dobre says, “to the favourite son of the Rumanian nation!” And he handed back the microphone to Ceaușescu.

“You did not have enough patience”, Ceaușescu half dead with fright clung on to this safety belt. “Yes, I see, you are not patient enough. Certain comrades lack the patience to listen to the end and hear what is at stake here. But anyone who lacks the patience would do better to put a pebble in his mouth and keep quiet—like this. God knows where he got that non-existent saying—he must have wanted to sound folksy or something. He started off with this faltering, daft and idiotic buffoonery which would have got even a child to laugh at him. No one had any idea of what he meant by that pebble—but of course it was plain enough what he wanted: time to recover somewhat.

But then as he’d struggled past his own pathetic joking, it turned out that he was well aware that we weren’t playing for paper money. He realized that this time he was confronted with tough and determined miners and that using threats would not get him anywhere. So he backed down.

He backed down in EVERYTHING. He promised EVERYTHING! The immediate introduction of the six-hour day everywhere, the reduced retirement age, a bonus for the disabled—he accepted all the 14 demands fully and without exception. He went out of his way to promise—and that was a very important item on the list—that there’d be no victimisation, not of the strikers, or the organizers or leaders—and he personally guaranteed that.

“I give you my solemn word, as Head of State and as the Party’s General Secretary, that all state and party leaders who were in any way responsible for the conditions in the Zsil Valley,

for the situation that has developed there, would be severely brought to account. They will be brought before you and you will have the right to pass judgement over them.”

That was a sort of extra bonus, spontaneously, given, no one had asked for that, I mean that we should pass judgement over the guilty—no, that was going a bit too far. I felt immediately that it was prompted by fear alone.

So he promised everything and more, the fulfillment of all our demands, he sealed this deal and agreement with his own word as Head of State—then he added in a lighter vein.

“I promised that all your demands will be fulfilled. Only one thing remains to be done, promise that you will make up for the loss in production. You all realise what key importance coal has in the economy, how much the nation needs your work, promise me then.”

And the miners said yes and promised to end the strike and go back to work the next day and make up for the losses too.

How naive we were, my God, how naive! Perhaps the men were very tired too by then standing about in the crowd for three days without food or drink—or I really don’t know what it was.

Comrade Ceaușescu, much relieved and beaming, took leave in an almost triumphant mood—I do believe he was relieved—he waved good-bye and boarded his waiting helicopter and flew to a safe place, to Craiova. He took Verdet with him too.

And the crowd dispersed. The strike had come to an end, and the people went home.

I was off home too. There was enough for me to think about on the way. I saw pretty clearly that we had been naive, and that all things considered, we had failed.

Zsolt Csalog’s books combine in a singular way his own voice as a writer and that of the persons he interviews.



“Courage is a question of character”

Last will and testament with a commentary

... I should also like you to know that I have not been narrow-mindedly prejudiced in favour of this or any other nation. I was forced to live in a strange age when it was very easy to acquire all kinds of labels. To give an example, it was not those who, let's say, closed down a school where teaching went on in a minority language, who were reckoned “nationalists”, it was on the contrary customary to call those reactionary, chauvinist well-poisoners in foreign pay who tried to air these things, and mostly in a timid and inefficient way.

You know, I could not let all these things pass without saying a word because—apart from anything else—I wanted to be able to look into your eyes one day when you would (and could) ask me, “Where did we get to? And you let it happen?”

Yes, perhaps even if I were an agricultural engineer or a fisherman, I would also be bound to protest, though the social contract of a fisherman or an agricultural engineer does not cover such things. But as a writer I had no alternative. That's how it happened that now I can look in your face without feeling ashamed—nor have you any cause to lower your eyes if someone asks you, what manner of man your father is.

I shall say nothing here about how closely I have been associated with sober and decent Rumanians, you are sure to know that, well, so much for nationalism. In this sense you must anyway read a symbolical meaning into the fact that I have translated, and am now enclosing for you, the International. (The old translation is, of course, finer, and has long developed overtones of its own. This one is perhaps more literal—as you can see, Pottier does not even mention proletarians—rhyme scheme, etc. and the first line . . .)

Furthermore, there is no truth in the persistent rumour that I fell into the hands of the police because of your maternal grandfather. It is true that he kept opening letters which I received by-passing the mails and he did not keep to himself the things he learnt, or thought he learnt—but he learnt nothing of real importance about me from them.

As far as he was concerned the meaning of the term “manly” was exhausted if a good family man lent a helping hand around the house. If I have done that, society will make progress, and should some graver problems emerge in everyday life, difficulties will be worked out by themselves, but certainly without us.

Later it was he too who spread the news that *Ellenpontok** was produced abroad and that I was in any way unsuited for the job of writing a memorandum. This knowledgeable information even resulted in people asking us whether it was true that we really had not written the petition. (I usually answer this by quoting what Cassius Clay had once said when asked by a journalist where he had obtained the witty phrases in his interviews. They weren't by him, were they? Clay reflected, and then said: strange, no one has ever asked me whether somebody else takes the blows for me in the ring.)

Of all the things I have tackled in various petitions your grandfather has also spoken in public. He is of the view that the problem of national minorities has been solved in an exemplary way in this country. The last time he wrote about this was on the birthday of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu in this year's January 26 issue of *Igazság*.

That certain episode happened the following way.

When one evening before Christmas I arrived home, or rather at your place, in a pretty bad shape, because I wanted to see you after such a long time, your grandfather first blocked

* A samizdat journal published in Rumania in Hungarian.

my way: you're not going to set foot in this house! But then, coming to his senses he rushed to the phone, and—you could see he was not doing this for the first time—he dialled the chief of the county secret police. He did not know that I had just come from there, that it was they who had released me. He phoned still in the belief that patrols with police-dogs were searching for me all over the country, as had been the case previously.

Since we lead so utterly different lives, it is possible that your grandfather will outlive me, although he is double my age. It is also possible that once he will need your help and you will have to keep and support him, and it is even possible you will have to do so out of the royalties you will inherit from me. All that is possible. But as you can see, it is not true that any of my troubles are due to him. Even that scene (me on the threshold, with crutches and legs swollen to double their size, and your grandfather, with gleaming eyes and a phone in his hand)—(even that scene fits into an operetta rather than a tragedy, and I harbour no ill will against him for anything, except that he bellowed at me in your sight and hearing, shouting that I am a crook and that because of me the whole family would end up in prison. But after all—and this should be in his favour—he is not just anxious about himself, not being threatened by prison, but about you, too, and all his strange acts and words can be traced back to this anxiety and so in fact he is worthy of your love. And so you should not feel uncertain whether or not I would be pleased to see on what and whom you spent the royalties for these poems. Do not hesitate for a moment *if*, I say such a situation were to arise. After all, he is your grandfather, and I myself would support him, if only for your mother's sake. One cannot blame him for his cowardice, his instincts are at fault, which he was born with, and the age in which he was forced to live, which intensified these instincts. I am no better than he only more fortunate; after all, fear is a biological question, no more than the excitability of certain colonies of cells in the cortex. The absence of fear is also a physiological question. In some people these same proteins function in a different way. Courage, however, also as a form of overcome and suspended fear, is a question of character. To put it in an aphoristic way:

Fear is biological.

The absence of fear is biological.

Courage depends on character.

This is why I cannot boast of being a brave man.

A sense of danger and taking risks have always done me good, intensifying my perception, putting my whole being on the alert, and virtually multiplying it. And so I cannot boast about being afraid, only rarely, if there is anything to be proud of, it is that I have tried to place this innate faculty at the service not of what is evil but of what is right.

I was once expecting Karcsi Tóth and others. They were coming by train from Nagyvárad. The express was an hour and a half late. When they arrived, they told me what had happened. Karcsi, in fact, is one of the rare truly courageous men. Somebody at the wheel of a car and with his family at his side had reckoned that he could make it over an unguarded railway crossing. He miscalculated and was snatched and chopped up by the train. That was what caused the delay.

"Well," I asked Karcsi, "to gain thirty seconds, this man hazarded and sacrificed not only his car and not only his own life, but that of his whole family. If he had to take risks for *Ellenpontok*, or let's say, some other, really important cause concerning all of us, do you think he would have taken the risks?"

György Lukács also writes about this somewhere. About people being able to dash across a busy street for a packet of tobacco, but if it were a question of . . . !?

I think if I were to die tonight, even then I have lived a great deal, regardless of everything else, for example of how I lived, much more than many others, not to mention those who have not even been given the chance to be born.

How then could I be dissatisfied?

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Antisemitism — a discussion

Péter Hanák: In Hungary the Jewish question in its modern form arose in the 19th century, with the rise of capitalism and modernisation. Characteristic of the early stage was that the Hungarian upper and middle classes favouring capitalist change, the liberal landholding nobility and their representatives in politics and the professions, realised that the country, needed to undergo a sweeping process of capitalist development. This required first of all a strong middle class, a strong bourgeoisie, or rather a change in the way of thinking and social function of the nobility. Baron József Eötvös, Ferenc Deák and Lajos Kossuth argued that the nobility must learn to think as burghers and the bourgeoisie as Hungarians. The Jewish question was part of this. The Jewish middle classes had to be Magyarised, and they were needed as participants in the great changes the country was undergoing. This was the primary motive which determined an economic and political alliance as well as the position of the liberal thinking regarding the Jewish question.

This current prevailed in Hungary during the reform period of the early 19th century, at the time of the 1848/49 Revolution and early on in the post-1867 Austro-Hungarian Empire. The crisis of 1873 created a break. At a time of economic depression the decline of the learned nobility and chiefly of the poorer les-

ser nobility assumed such a scale that there was a search for an ideology, which meant feeling one's way to a sort of redistribution theory. They found it in economic and political anti-Semitism, which was gaining strength about that time in Germany and France.

From the 1880s on the relationship of the Hungarian ruling class and Jewry became ambivalent on both sides. Both needed to maintain the economic and political alliance. Hungarian national domination, and the preservation of the country's integrity, was the *suprema lex*, and the greater part of Jewry fitted into this way of looking at things. But in the meanwhile anti-Semitism grew and was strengthening and gave tongue in the Anti-Semitic party, then in the Catholic People's party, in the Agrarian Movement and in other right-wing organisations already before the Great War. In other words, the relationship turned ambivalent as far as the Hungarians were concerned. Albeit the embers of the old liberalism had not died down. Thus, 1895 saw Judaism receiving equal status as a religious denomination, the government party openly supported Jewish integration and assimilation, the poet Endre Ady's exemplary attitude in favour of accepting a Hungarian-Jewish shared fate or of a democratic national Hungarian idea as a melting pot. But anti-Semitism got stronger all the same.

This could be noticed from the other vantage point as well. Both in the reform period and at the time of the 1867 Compromise a large part of Jewry were willing to accept assimilation—though there was a split as regards religious organization and practice—and they chose the use of the Hungarian

A discussion of historians published in the 1989 July issue of *Világosság* and held jointly with Hungarian Radio. It was chaired by Péter Hanák, Gyula Juhász, Viktor Karády, Miklós Szabó and László Varga were the participants.

language and allegiance to the Hungarian state rather than other options. This sort of unanimity began to break up in the 1880s and 1890s. The ambivalence manifested itself in an increasing Jewish psychosis, in the recognition that there were also drawbacks to assimilation.

The problem became an explosive one after the Great War, the two revolutions, the dismemberment of Hungary after Trianon and during the Horthy régime, when conditions changed radically. The country was bankrupt, it had suffered defeat. The liberal idea and system had failed and there was need for a scapegoat, too. Various nations had broken free from Hungary: the Jews were no longer needed to maintain national hegemony. Liberalism was replaced by totalitarian, conservative and then national socialist ways of thinking.

Between the two World Wars anti-Semitism was raised to the level of an official political ideology, which, after Hitler's rise to power, led straight to the emergence and strengthening of extreme right movements in Hungary, to the three anti-Jewish laws and the tragedy which followed.

Gyula Juhász: Let me add something. The collapse and Trianon undoubtedly occasioned a change which this country experienced as an awful catastrophe. This change brought also the question of anti-Semitism into prominence, but not only from the point of view of looking for a scapegoat. If we examine any one of the trends of Hungarian intellectual life, we can see that on the basis of the experience of the Great War, the revolutions and Trianon, some sort of change was thought necessary in Hungarian political ideology as well as in Hungarian intellectual life. The historian Gyula Szekfű and others, too, established the mistakes of the third generation as the source of these ills. They pointed to the responsibility not only of Hungarian Jewry, of the Hungarian Jewish intelligentsia, but of the alien elements on the whole.

This problem became much more acute on the eve of the Second World War, but at that time, other assimilated ethnic groups lose their importance and stress is laid on the assimilated Jews. A high proportion of the leading figures of the Hungarian working-class movement were of Jewish birth, thus in the 1920s a search was initiated aiming to discover whether leftism was possible without Jews. This was a very strong motivation when the populist movement was founded.

Péter Hanák: I agree with Gyula Juhász in that an anti-bourgeois position, whether it

appeared in the form of open anticapitalism or in that of a Third Way philosophy, was interwoven with a special kind of shifting the responsibility. What was absent also this time was the courage to face facts: facing up to the responsibility of the nation's ruling class, especially that of that part of the middle class which was of gentry origin.

László Varga: To put it bluntly: How did earlier liberalism in our parts change into anti-Semitism? Let us only compare the Hungary of the millennium with post-Trianon Hungary! The former was brimming over with strength, with a highly successful quarter century behind it, full of—here and there—exaggerated self-assurance. The latter followed a lost war, crushed revolutions and an incredible dismemberment of the country.

The second factor is that after Trianon the so far exemplary assimilation of Jewry was questioned. Due to Trianon, Hungary actually became a nation state. Besides, disillusionment with the given manner of capitalist development cannot be denied. Earlier the liberal nobility still believed they could be part of capitalist progress and benefit from it. But they awoke too late and were simply ousted.

There was one more important factor, although it already concerned really only a small section of society, it was precisely these few Jewish intellectuals who were mostly in the public eye. Aladár Komlós, the writer, formulated this as follows: "If the Hungarian nation of post-war times rejected the Jews, the most assimilated Jewish elements first of all, it was not because the Jews were insufficiently assimilated. The trouble was that the Jews had assimilated to the Hungarian progressives: to Ady, Móricz and the *Nyugat* circle. They were not aware that only they had assimilated to Endre Ady, the Christian middle classes had not."

Viktor Karády: Let me get back to the antecedents, to the 19th century. To put it briefly: the way I see it is that in the first three quarters of the 19th century the Hungarian ruling élite (meaning the nobility in the first place) adopted and tried to carry through a social programme, an important element of which was the integration of the citizens of non-Hungarian ethnicity, the creation of a new-type national élite. They wanted to modernise the country in such a way that this new-type national élite, in which the bourgeoisie—notably the bourgeoisie of Jewish and German origin—was considerably over-represented, should assume a major role. At the end of the century, however, certain sections of this power élite had new ideas, which

already preferred to modernise without the assimilated bourgeoisie.

Anti-Semitism had a bearing on the crisis of modernisation. In part on the economic difficulties, in part on the fact that, in the judgement of the nobility, the bourgeoisie with a strong presence of Jews had come to exercise too powerful an influence. Then there appeared views which set bourgeois Jewish-German elite thinking against more traditional and originally conservative Hungarian elite thinking. There were efforts to confront traditional Hungarian character with a character of the bourgeois type.

This is why I think that the crisis at the end of the century was a crisis of modernisation. This crisis troubled the idea of modernisation which had animated the liberal nobility and had been preferred by them up to that time.

Miklós Szabó: I also wish to revert to the 19th-century capitalist changes, because this is really the essence of the problem. The whole of Hungarian society was gripped by an identity crisis when the modern bourgeoisie emerged from people of Jewish origin. The problem was one of reverse assimilation. The cause was precisely the fact that this Jewish bourgeoisie assimilated in the national sense, as its native language was Hungarian. Its politics were Hungarian and it wanted to be Hungarian. Since, in economic terms, it had obviously become one of the ruling classes, it was felt that now there was a threat from within, the like of which the Hungarian nation had faced from without during the Bach era which followed the failure of the 1848/49 Revolution. After all, Hungarian national consciousness in the modern sense, Hungarian ways of thinking, had evolved in the Reform Period and was forthwith exposed to danger in the Bach era. And after 1867 a consequence of the Bach era was that the newly settled people became Magyarised. Bishop Ottokár Prohászka, a noted Catholic ideologue, was the son of an official who had come to Hungary from Bohemia. He was entirely Hungarian in his vernacular, a real Hungarian nationalist. The possibility arose that a choice would have to be made between modernity and an Hungarian identity. When, after a serious crisis lasting several years, around the turn of the century, the Hungarian owners of latifundia ultimately concluded a kind of political pact with the new Jewish bourgeoisie and admitted them also into the recently formed governing party, the Work Party, an implied condition was that the landowners managed and interpreted all questions connected with national consciousness and nationalism, that

there should be no liberal Hungarian nationalism, no liberal national consciousness opposed to them. And this was feasible in only one way — if the Jews remained Jews. They could be rich, they could engage in politics, they might possess equal rights in every respect, but they would be considered Jews.

The three anti-Jewish laws

Gyula Juhász: Still at the beginning of our discussion we have already reached the threshold of the Second World War, that is the problem of how the antecedents had led to the enactment in Hungary of anti-Jewish laws in 1938, even before the outbreak of the Second World War.

In this connection I should like to raise two issues. One is that, of course, the rise of Nazi Germany and its impact on Hungary had an elemental effect which made it possible for the government to initiate such legislation. It is beyond doubt that such legislation was not contrary to public opinion. Hungarian society of the interwar years was pregnant with awful social tensions. Raising the Jewish question in this connection suggested a false alternative. It was argued that the social tensions could be eased not only making use of the methods suggested by Hungarian leftist or democratic intellectuals, but that each and every question could be answered in reference to the Jews. I think this was the reason why in May 1938, when the first anti-Jewish bill was tabled in Parliament, powerful voices were raised against this legislation—for well-known Hungarian authors, artists and public figures openly protested, but the protest was not effective enough to reach the masses or even the bulk of the middle classes. Even this effect dispersed by 1939 when the second anti-Jewish Act became law. At the same time as it introduced the second anti-Jewish law framed in much more severe terms than the first one had been, the Imrédy government submitted a bill on land-tenure, which put on the agenda the agrarian question, that is, a consideration of the social problem of the Hungarian peasantry. I think this was at least one of the reasons why arguments against this anti-Jewish law got stuck in the mud, that Hungarian intellectuals who had real authority in the interwar years slowly dissociated themselves—at best by relapsing into silence—from the position they had endorsed in May 1938.

Péter Hanák: I think this is an important matter, one which in fact may possibly lead us to the bottom of this complicated question.

on. Why did the anti-Jewish laws move the masses? We must be extra careful not to answer that this was so because the contagion spread to the whole people—this would be an oversimplification. But the mass effect nevertheless needs explaining. Gyula Juhász has mentioned and important argument. And let me add the following: When we say that in the first three quarters of the 19th century a positive line for reception of Jews was dominant, we still have to admit that there was always present, as an undertow, a sort of aversion, a hostility to Jews, an emotional motive for reluctant reception, which was manifest most of all in social and family relations. There are documents, in the press, in books and humorous magazines, showing that Jew-taunting existed, in a little joking or jovial manner, but it existed even in the 1960s. Indeed: one and the same mind could harbour a kind of political liberalism as well as emotional stand-offishness, even a certain aversion.

Secondly, right at the start of our discussion we spoke primarily about how anti-Semitism strengthened amongst the landed proprietors, and the Hungarian gentry and middle class. But we barely mentioned that there had existed also a bourgeoisie in decline, a sort of traditional urban population of shopkeepers and artisans. Hundreds of thousands who found themselves in difficulties as a consequence of capitalist free competition. This was so in many countries. In France these people supported romantic anticapitalism. In Hungary romantic anticapitalism and practical anti-Semitism got on well together amongst the traditional bourgeois and petty-bourgeois. We cannot leave out of account either that in certain peasant and working-class communities there existed also a superstitious, populist kind of anti-Semitism, of religious origin, that acquired economic motives later, mixed in with a small measure of anticapitalism.

Finally—and I consider this just as important as the foregoing—the Jews looked different. I have in mind, for example, some of the Orthodox Jews, mainly in the northern counties, their clothing, their manners, their way of talking. Their very faith was also different. Everyone else in Hungary was Christian. The Jewish norms of conduct and behaviour, which sharpened the conflict, seemed rather odd outside the downtown areas of Budapest. Why did demagogues manage to move the masses? For economic and political reasons, of course, but this differentness, this long perceivable and manifest strangeness, was also an important factor. This differentness could be blamed even for one's own

wrongs, and what is more: here were scapegoats for the ills suffered in the course of history. All this served as an argument and emotional background for those who claimed to be Hungarian from way back when they wished to ostracise even assimilated Jews.

Viktor Karády: Just because modernisation in Hungarian society had reached a certain stage by the end of the last century, there formed those groups, those people who carried forward, and did so very effectively, the principle of the liberal idea of reception-assimilation which the liberal nobility had formulated and put into practice in the first two thirds of the century.

By the fin de siècle there existed—a somewhat institutionalised, and otherwise organised in the guise of informal groups—type of modern intellectual or bourgeois class which included Jews. Just by way of example, for Hungarian freemasons the more liberal lodges provided an element of far-reaching integration. Such were then all kinds of modernisation media in literature, art and public taste, like *Nyugat*, including the circle of Ady's friends, furthermore the Sociological Society, and also the Galilei Circle. That is to say, those western-oriented intellectuals who favoured a European type of modernisation. But such was also the legal profession, which was an institutional body, a professional body, an element of far-reaching integration. If we examine, on the basis of recent research, the behaviour of Hungarian lawyers up to the time of the persecution of Jews, we can see that in such a professional milieu there was very little scope for active, militant anti-Semitism.

The different sections of society included a number of interest groups—even political ones within the anti-liberal ruling élite in control of the government—which did not renounce the ideas of Jewish assimilation and refused to join the anti-Semites. Thus the whole tenure of office as Prime Minister of Count István Bethlen illustrates how it is possible to pursue conservative—incidentally called a Christian—policy by gradually disarming the active anti-Semites. Another example is, with reference to a different environment, the Catholic, royalist aristocracy.

Signs of integration were present in a quite different field as well. If we look at the statistical trend of mixed marriages made possible by the 1895/96 legislation, one notes to one's surprise that the probability and frequency of mixed marriages grew steadily until the end of the period—i.e. from the close of the last century to the passing of the first anti-Jewish law. In Budapest, for example,

one fifth of Jews contracting marriage in 1936 and 1937 married Christian women.

Thus the possibility of assimilation in Hungarian society remained; it even increased together with the anti-Semite movements and probably did so in conjunction with the strengthening of those movements.

Péter Hanák: The accepted Hungarian idea of a political nation, of a recipient nation, of a not purely ethnic nation, survived the inter-war years. But anti-Semitism had different social and political charges and hues, from racial anti-Semitism to political or emotional anti-Semitism. The Chamber of Lawyers was liberal indeed, but the legal profession as a whole was not. In Hungary there was a great deal of difference between the anti-Semitism of lawyers invested with various government functions and the relative liberalism of the Chamber of Lawyers which maintained close relations with Jewish business firms: Or let us look at the National Association of Medical Practitioners. Many of them, though they had taken an oath to care for the sick, did not consider racialism as offensive to their calling.

Gyula Juhász: It was around 1938 that the notion of a political nation went out of fashion in Hungary and that of an ethnic or race nation replaced it, simultaneously with anti-Semitic legislation. I think it is important there to point out that intolerance when faced with the different became marked in this country. This was so perhaps all the world over, including democratic countries in Europe as well, but it had no consequences such as those encountered here, because intolerance has tragic consequences precisely where democratic ways are non-existent.

In Hungary the conservative political structure also began to fall apart in 1938/39, or, at least as regards its ideas, it moved rightwards and managed to reach a point where it was ready to withdraw the civil rights of people, excluding them from society because of their birth. And do not forget the third anti-Jewish law, which was a genuine racist law. It prohibited mixed marriage, and even sexual intercourse, between a Jew and a non-Jew. The law does not alter the fact that till 1944 the situation of Jews in Hungary was in a sense more favourable than in some of the other German-occupied or German satellite countries. But this law was the soil of the holocaust in Hungary following the German occupation.

The return of survivors

Péter Hanák: We have now come to the central theme of our present discussion: a survey

and analysis of the shaping of the post-1945 situation.

A terrible tragedy afflicted Hungary in 1943/44 but we now stress that phase in which about half a million Jews living within the borders of Hungary at the time, fell victim to the holocaust. Around two hundred thousand managed to return home in 1945. With what reception did surviving or returning Jews meet in Hungary on the part of their fellow Hungarians?

Viktor Karády: Obviously no proper picture can be given without a survey based on detailed questionnaires. I have not conducted anything that would approach something of that sort, but I think that the reception has two or possibly three very important factors, which Jews have not forgotten. One of them, the decisive experience, I think, is an untrustful, unkind welcome. In 1944 the possessions, homes and valuables not only of those deported but also of the Jews in general were either confiscated, or plundered and taken apart, in short, a sort of institutionalised looting took place here. This looting was very difficult to undo. It was therefore under very difficult psychological conditions that the Jews returned home—even those whom the environment protected to the maximum possible degree, with sympathy—it is one thing to sympathise with the persecuted and it is quite another to meet them in a situation where they ask for the return of their valuables.

There is no denying that there were many examples to the contrary. But the decisive experience for Jews was that their reception was not as unequivocally favourable as they could have hoped, nor as it was, for example, in France, not to mention the Netherlands, Norway or Italy. In Hungary, however, the welcome was, to tell the truth, a very peculiar and distrustful one.

The other factor of the post-1945 reception is that, although the Jews were liberated, the country had lost the war. The overwhelming majority of the population experienced 1945 as a time of defeat in war, as the loss of independence. And here the way of thinking of Jews differed essentially from that of the majority of the non-Jews.

The third factor, which must be talked about because it has been left unmentioned, and I think it is amongst the responsibilities of Hungarians, is mourning. Jews had to mourn in a way without precedent in their modern history or European history in general, or in the history of any particular nation. In democratic countries their fellow citizens shared in this mourning but not in Hungary. Hungarians have not coped with

their past in a manner considered appropriate even in countries which had taken an active part in the persecution of Jews. Home-coming Jews were received in Hungary by silence, and not simply by silence, but by some sort of reproachful silence. Institutions, churches and various public bodies did not join them in their immensurable mourning, on the contrary, József Darvas for instance argued in an article that the sufferings of Jews were nothing special because the entire Hungarian nation had suffered under the old régime.

Péter Hanák: The churches solemnly apologised.

Viktor Karády: Only one made gestures of this sort, the Calvinist Church. It apologised under very problematic circumstances, since some members disavowed this apology. Thus it was not unanimous. And, as far as I know, no other church made any such gesture.

Gyula Juhász: It should be added that not only was there no institutional apology—let us use this term—offered for the holocaust, but neither intellectual empathy with it, nor a proper discussion followed. In the first issue of *Válasz* for 1947 Gyula Illyés wrote a poem which hinted at the holocaust. István Bibó in 1948 wrote a major essay on the Jewish question. Erik Molnár, as a Communist, had published an article in 1946. And these were all connected with the new problems, after all there had been pogroms post-war, and that was the context in which the question was raised.

László Varga: Since Bibó it has been spelled out clearly that the year 1944, the Hungarian holocaust, posed a problem not only to Jews. Of course it was the Jews in the first place who experienced a trauma from which they have not recovered to this day, and from which they will probably never recover. Their very bones were saturated with the fear of annihilation. But the spiritual constitution of Hungarians has also been seriously deformed by 1944.

It is certain that the official attitude under Stalinism, branding the entire nation as fascist, proved counter-productive. It simply made it impossible to face the past and earlier complicity in crimes in the manner proposed by Bibó. To this day, I feel, this has had, apart from Jews, very serious effects on the spiritual constitution of the nation.

Miklós Szabó: At this point a certain fear, a phobia has to be mentioned. People were afraid of being paid back. It was often said in private conversation but could not be put on paper in writing, thus future historians will find no documentary evidence. But László Németh had said it out loud in 1943 and those

who had not kept their nose entirely clean—perhaps they had done no more than engage in mild verbal Jew baiting, and there were a great many like that—felt that this concerned them. And even those who perhaps were not anti-Semitic knew full well that there was ground enough to fear vengeance. This underlay the implicit, but most aggressive rebuff, that nothing good could be said of the Jews that might justify the expected retribution.

And as far as mourning was concerned, many people thought that until the prisoners of war had come home, and as long as those killed fighting in Russia could not be mourned, there was no need to mourn Jews either. There was one more circumstance which increased tension: the Hungarian civil service and the officer corps had eliminated Jews first tacitly, then institutionally, in the post Great War years. Now reactionary and compromised officials were put on what was called the B-list, those unable to give a proper account of themselves. Their replacements, in many cases, were properly qualified Jews who had survived the War.

László Varga: I think the possibility of retribution is an important matter. As Miklós Szabó has just mentioned, László Németh spoke of Jewish vengeance as early as 1943, when defining fear. The same was done in the summer of 1944 by István Bibó, who spoke of fear of vengeance on behalf of the middle classes. Thus fear of vengeance was already expressed when the destruction of the Jews was started, or rather when it was in process.

Another essential matter was adaptation to the new society, I think this should be discussed in greater detail.

Péter Hanák: It is difficult today to judge the position and attitude of various sections of Hungarian society with regard to the home-coming Jewish survivors. No contemporary survey is available, and memories are not always reliable, especially when something like this is involved. Besides such issues cannot be settled by surveys and statistics. I know from my own experience that there were a great many who saved people and property, who welcomed home and cheerfully helped Jewish friends and acquaintances returning from hell. But if a survey were to show that fifty per cent were one way and fifty per cent another, it would not express anything from the point of view of how all this had been fixed in the minds of the two sides. This has little to do with percentages. In that I fully agree with Viktor Karády. I would not give such emphasis and relevance to the responsibility of those petty-bourgeois and ordinary people

who had kept a few objects of value which they came to consider their own property, and then they had to give them back. This human attitude is, if not excusable, at least understandable, and that was not of the essence.

The Jews who had survived and come home—at least those who had a role in defining public opinion—were not really concerned about a few gold coins or other valuables. I think the problem is that the Hungarian intellectual élite which, particularly during the Age of Reform, than in 1848, early this century and, in 1918, had shown itself highly sensitive to national and moral problems, and this included the populists as well, allowed this moral sensibility, this moral sense of responsibility to grow dull and flat. In 1945/46 self-examination failed to take place, and now all this remains irreparable for ever. This has been left out of Hungarian intellectual life and no amends can be made today, not even with the best of intentions, because a second or third generation's sense of responsibility for the deeds of the fathers does not work. This is a great gap in our intellectual development.

The second question to which it is now easy to switch is the remarkable, well perceivable and accountable fact that the majority of the hundred odd thousand intellectual and clerical Jews who had returned and had not emigrated became Marxists and joined or supported the Communist Party.

The great illusion

Viktor Karády: The surviving Jews who had come home after a huge loss of life and immense sufferings naturally looked for a refuge, for something to hold on to in the new power system. This did not simply mean their influx into the Communist Party but also their general engagement in politics. And taking part in politics was characteristic of all Hungarians then or at least of the middle classes. After 1945 the middle classes undergoing change looked for political footholds and this process went on in conjunction with the political realignment of the surviving Jewry.

Early on the Communist Party truly had great attractive powers. This had at least two aspects. One, which I have already discussed elsewhere, is that those of the Jews who survived in larger numbers, i.e. the urban middle classes and professional people, possessed some political capital, which they had amassed earlier, and were substantially over-represented in all sorts of political movements offering universal values: in Freemasonry, in bourgeois radicalism, in the Social Democrat-

ic and Communist movements. Speaking of numbers this political capital was more strongly concentrated in the Social Democratic Party or in the bourgeois left than in the Communist Party, which had very few members. The other aspects was that the post-1945 Communist Party taking a new lease of life and organising itself as a mass party was the strongest nucleus of power which was anti-fascist in character and was able to provide security, being backed by the Red Army.

But I have to emphasise that in the first round, between 1945 and 1947, increasing involvement in politics meant not only the Communist Party. A very considerable part of the Jewish intelligentsia, but mainly of the surviving lower middle classes, looked not to the Communist Party in the first place but to a sort of newly built, newly constructed Jewish identity, in other words Zionism. A singular, novel phenomenon was that a considerable number of surviving Jews became Zionists. This was the first phase. In the second phase, during which political groupings, Zionism among them, rivalling the Communist Party were eliminated in succession, there began a large-scale drift towards the monopolistic power centre. To my mind, however, this trend is somewhat exaggerated in retrospect. It was no exclusive choice, since at the same time as the Communist Party gained monopolistic power during the Year of the Change, the propertied middle class socially declined, including Jews who were still considerably represented among small, middling and big capitalists in possession of urban property. Thus they joined the party and at the same time, becoming *declassé*, they became alienated from the newly organising political system.

Miklós Szabó: As far as I can judge, Jews drifted not only to the Communist Party: they were divided between the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party. My view on this matter—albeit I have been contradicted—is that more joined the Communist Party, but a considerable number, chiefly not intellectual but petty-bourgeois Jews, chose the Social Democratic Party. They had no other option. The Peasant Party alone expressed openly anti-Semitic views, and as regards the Smallholders Party, the Jews soon discovered that all the anti-Semites who had harassed them had voted for that party at the two memorable elections. What remained therefore were the other two parties. Besides, the reason why the Communist Party proved more attractive was that it was the party which had been the most steadfast opponent of gentry Hungary, of which the Jews were

victims and to which they were obviously opposed.

It is part of the picture that an invitation was extended to them. The Communist Party greatly needed them. The old genteel Christian middle class as an unreliable factor had to be replaced right away, and it would have taken a long time to educate new, folk-based professional people. Actually professional routine continuity might have been interrupted as it was in the Soviet Zone in Germany, resulting in a real catastrophe. This was probably the principal reason why the G.D.R. fell so far behind the Federal Republic. In Hungary, on the other hand, there existed an educated old professional class, which was made up of experienced professional men and was entirely reliable at the same time. These people thus found themselves in a doubtlessly privileged position but, by essentially preserving professional-intellectual routine continuity, they practically saved the country from a kind of national catastrophe. The Rákosi régime did not fall behind as much as, say the G.D.R. or —after 1968—Czechoslovakia, where people lost their jobs on a scale that interrupted continuity. Czechoslovakia has not recovered from this loss to this day.

There is another problem which, in turn, is a tough one: From the 19th century to 1945 Jews all over the world were always drawn towards the Left. Already before 1918, emancipated Jews, who were harassed in many places, always supported leftist movements and took the side of persecuted persons, usually disapproving of dictatorships. In 1945 it dawned on the Jews that they were victims of totalitarianism, of a dictatorship, and that a Jew could not support a movement that made use of such methods. But returning Jews also felt that they were the victims of German and Hungarian nationalism, and that the new democratic system should repress this German and Hungarian nationalism. This included the possible use of the same methods as nationalism had employed against them.

László Varga: 1944 had destroyed the traditional Hungarian Jewish identity which had favoured assimilation involving Magyarisation. In 1944 they suddenly realised that many Hungarians repudiated them. Consequently they needed a new evident identity, and this presented itself in socialism and communism. These, breaking with liberal traditions as well, promised them the solution of the Jewish question. Then, from the repudiation of earlier national identity there followed internationalism, and from the repudiation of earlier liberalism there resulted assimilation to a new totalitarian system.

Péter Hanák: Indeed, internationalism, that is, the resolution of the national idea in a synthetic sense of community declared to be of a higher order seemed to be an appropriate ideological means to evade frustrated national identification. Adaptation was not directly to the Hungarian nation and its ways of thinking including its populist, rightist traditions, but through Communism, into a universal humanity. The Jewish intellectual élite which I am talking about was tending towards the Social Democratic and Communist Parties already during the war.

I know that I am about to move onto shaky soil, yet I have to mention that certain character traits also played a part in this matter. The European Jewish assimilated intelligentsia cherishes, besides a powerfully developed rationality, also a sort of latent Messianic attitude which gains strength in critical periods, at the time of trials. The fact is that members of my generation—who had grown up in the 1930s—rationally understood Marxism, the twofold character of commodities, surplus value and exploitation of man by man, but emotionally they connected it with the world-wide depression, with the crisis of humanity provoked by Nazism, and so came to share a Messianic belief that Communism alone could overcome this crisis.

Viktor Karády: We might say therefore that Marxism fulfilled here the function of a salvation ideology for Jews who had just escaped the danger of death.

But I should mention that even the Smallholders Party included a prominent Jewish group of big bourgeois, in élite positions at that. Running through the Stalinist era, is a certain threefold division which broke up families. One and the same surviving Jewish family might have had members who emigrated to Palestine and later to Israel or to the West, there were others who were persecuted bourgeois forcibly relocated in the early fifties to the Hortobágy wasteland, and there were others who were prominent (C.P.) Party officials or officers in the State Security Authority. Thus one must not uniformly consider the Jews of the Stalinist era to have been the servants of the régime. A careful survey can probably identify just as many Jews among the victims as among Party members.

The reason why Communist Party ideology could be a sort of salvation ideology for the surviving Jews is that it rested on universal values and required a passionate feeling of commitment which—as Péter Hanák put it so aptly—largely satisfied the never suppressed Messianistic desire which had always been present in discriminated against Jews who

often found themselves living in jeopardy. Thus the inflow of Jewry into the Stalinist power apparatus was based on different psychological facts and a different kind of experience than that of other middle class people. A very peculiar, a very intensive—I might as well say—overcharged relationship, as soon as Stalinism was discredited, was present amongst the opposition of Stalinism, at the same heat, and maybe even more overcharged.

László Varga: The Jews integrating themselves into the power structure had one more essential quality, they had a permanently guilty conscience, for they were not really the kind of party cadre the régime had in mind. The cadre is supposed to be a worker, perhaps a peasant, but not a middle class or, at best, a petty-bourgeois Jew. Therefore this identity must also be denied. Self-identification in this way takes on an explicitly neophyte character: a real blind faith which led to radical disappointment after 1953. I think the two processes can be understood only in their interaction.

Viktor Karády: A decisive aspect of this consciousness of guilt, which I consider very important, is that positive integration of the communist type implied the necessity of publicly repudiating or denying every kind of Jewish identity. This demanded from Jews a self-repression unparalleled in Hungarian history.

The degree of repression was almost unbelievable. Jewish identity in cadre families was entirely taboo. Not only was it left unmentioned, but the children themselves did not know about their origins. Grandparents who had perished were not talked about, except in a general way saying that they had died long ago. I think the ensuing transformation of consciousness cannot be explained unless we recall that the words Jew, Jewish question, Jewish problem practically never occurred in public from as early as 1949—the date can be clearly determined by the year of change—until 1954/55, and appeared only sporadically even later up to the end of the 1960s. Jews as a factor of Hungarian history or of capitalist progress simply ceased to exist in public historical thinking, in the press, in the teaching and writing of history. But historians know this better than I do.

Péter Hanák: Indeed, in most Jewish families, both at home and in one's mind, as well as outwardly, it was forbidden to acknowledge or accept Judaism. This was not a sense of shame, but it was taboo, something that was not to be uttered because it was meaningless. A reasonable argument was that communism in its most developed form did not recognise

religious or national differences. These would fade away and disappear. But repression nevertheless resulted in mental conflicts, in psychological troubles. For grandchildren often came to know about what had become of their grandparents when the six-year-old Jewish child at home started to talk in a Jew-baiting manner. The parents then told the child that he too was Jewish. The child then protested, struggling against this negative image. Besides, there were the euphemisms invented in Hungary—but maybe elsewhere, too—that in 1943/44 “we were persecuted as victims of fascism.” Or: “we were hard hit by the fascist laws of the time.” This certainly left deep marks in the hearts of communist Jewish intellectuals, inflicted deep injuries upon them.

Viktor Karády: We must not forget either that integration of the communist type was based on an ideology which repressed all kinds of particular identity, including Jewish identity. And primarily its modern variety which was realised concretely in Hungary, or rather in Europe, that is Zionism. Zionism added one more political enemy image to that possible Jewish image which the offspring of Jewish cadres of the 1950s could form of this group, that is of their identity.

Péter Hanák: This is entirely true, and it leads us to the next question. As soon as the Messianistic faith in communism had been shaken, or had melted away, what was left was a rational judgement of the future. This meant economic reform, the conversion of the socialist system into a European one, i.e. return to the rational democratic ideas of the second reform generation of the early years of the century. Then came the time of disillusionment, as a particularly real-life revelation in 1956, under the influence of the revolution. At the time a significant, influential part of the communist intelligentsia returned to a critical-rational attitude. And it is about here that we have to find an answer to our third question: Which are the motivations of Jewish dissimulation? I think one of the motivational factors, which has presented itself ever more steadily during the past decade and a half, is cultural consciousness, return to Jewish traditions, open acceptance of a dual attachment.

Miklós Szabó: When national assimilation proved a failure, by going a roundabout way Jews could assimilate as leftists, as communists and become accepted members of a Hungarian society under communist rule. Even such gestures of surrender of national assimilation such as, e.g., baptism could be avoided. Adherence to a leftist movement is

not surrender, since it takes place in a different dimension.

In 1957 there arose a new, peculiar kind of—how shall I name it?—cadre anti-Semitism. For in the leftist opposition of the just established Kádár régime the idea first presented itself that all evil things done against the romantic, the brave popular cadre were the doings of the Jewish cadres who before 1953 had been the main promoters of Stalinism and then, in fact, had changed sides to become supporters of Imre Nagy, that is revisionists. It then became inevitable, as an only chance, to discover one's own identity in some form or another and to resume it.

In the 1970s there was a certain ethnic renaissance in many parts of the world. This was felt in Hungary, too, and then a step was taken towards resuming such a Jewish identity as, properly speaking, had not been the identity of the Hungarian Jewish bourgeoisie around the turn of the century either. They did not wish to return to the secularised identity of the bourgeoisie of the turn of the century, but to a Jewish religious identity, to its rediscovery, and to the repeated establishment of a Jewish identity based on it.

László Varga: Reverting to the question of dissimulation: it is impossible to disregard the Six-Day War of 1967. The slowly unfolding but invariably repressed thinking of the silenced Jews found itself in a conflict situation in 1967. As Jews they wished to identify themselves with the State of Israel, with the war waged by Israel, but were compelled, as loyal Hungarian citizens, to denounce it. The same problem came up again, in a more striking manner, in the 1973 war. And it appeared also in the form of a latent, covert anti-Semitism which affected cultural policy as well.

Viktor Karády: In my opinion the problems of dissimulation cannot be interpreted without recalling what happened in 1956, before and after. In 1956 many Jewish intellectuals, party intellectuals in particular, took the lead. Hungarian Jews, chiefly members of the cadre-intelligentsia, were to be found in the leadership of the Petöfi Circle, in all the intellectual reform movements. But in conjunction with that, of course as early as 1956, but mainly after 1956, some of the cadre-intelligentsia drifted back into the Party and the apparatus. From that time on it is possible to trace a new sort of dual division, where on the one hand there remains Party integration of the old type, together with its ideology—thus with repression and its consequences—and on the other hand members of the intelligentsia sentenced to years of imprisonment and discriminated against after 1956, fought for reforms.

I emphasise the struggle of the people's front type, because here one can see no kind of dissimulation. At most the fact that the Jews who happened to be ashamed of their particular identity before 1956, or mainly before 1953, no longer repressed it and by consciously acknowledging and accepting it, they took part in that people's front struggle. This duality is very important. The dissimulation we are speaking about was a subsequent phenomenon, which gained some strength—as I see it—in the late 1970s and characterised the 1980s, and which was prompted in all probability by the new-type behaviour patterns of European Jewry, i.e. of the Jewry harmoniously integrated in nation states with strengthened ethnic consciousness. A natural aspect is solidarity with the State of Israel, which has been a natural right and a matter of course in the nation states of Western Europe since the foundation of the State, legitimacy of which is denied by nobody (except a few fascist, ultra-rightist parties), and which is given free play both by the Churches—the great Churches included—and by the parties which are part of the great democratic coalitions, i.e. the Social Democratic parties. In Hungary, on the other hand, no such possibility existed publicly up to the late seventies and early eighties.

The new fact is that from the 1980s on it has become possible to express this old-new identity; and I think this is important in the process of the country's Europeanisation. Groups of particular status—including the Jews as one of them, and such are also the national minorities—are suddenly or gradually given the possibility to express their own identity.

Péter Hanák: If I am not mistaken, there are three main arguments, three very serious arguments, worth consideration. One is that all of Europe — nay the whole world — has experienced a renaissance of ethnic consciousness since the fifties and sixties, from Ireland to Spain, to America and our very region. It is only natural that Jewish identity, or at least certain forms of it, should become visible and be given voice sooner or later in public, too.

The second argument is that since the Messianistic, redemptive spell of the socialist idea has come to an end, identification must be sought with actually existing communities: the Hungarians, the Poles or, in a sense, the Jews. And the existence of the State of Israel plays a role from this point of view as well.

The third argument, no matter how paradoxical it may appear, is that the bourgeois development of Hungarian society implies two tendencies. Liberalisation on the one

hand and reviving hostilities on the other, namely the fact that hidden anti-Semitism is articulated. I cannot identify this as any sort of national or Jewish tragedy. However odd it may be, this is in a sense a sign of improvement. One does not get better when the ulcers do not burst but spread inward and must be lanced. These thoughts, ideas, antipathies, superstitions, prejudices still exist. They existed also earlier but could not rise to the surface. Thoughts and emotions leading to anti-Semitism or just to certain antipathies now present themselves more openly. On the other hand, dual Jewish attachment is equally manifested more openly and freely by those who say: we are Hungarians but do not want to abandon our Jewishness. And this eases the afore-mentioned mental trouble, this schizophrenia. That the Jewish question comes up here in our debate and many other debates more openly is, in my view, to be welcomed. Even if this also carries overtones—as it happened in a recent dispute—yet this is likewise part of our increasingly free publicity.

László Varga: The same point couched in almost identical terms was raised in a radio programme by Miklós Szabó a few months ago, and it provoked quite shocking reactions. He was branded an anti-Semite. Yet the fear has some foundation. I consider it illusory that irrationality could be fought off by rational arguments. I also agree that we have to get liberalised, democratised. An inevitable side-effect of this is that opinions to the contrary are also expressed. But these will not always be rational opinions but include such as cannot be fought against by pure reason.

Miklós Szabó: My argument which produced such a scandal was that I did not think that an anti-Semite can be converted and be argued out of his anti-Semitism. On the other hand, a sensible course of action is to use reasonable arguments, or simple arguments, persuade those who are not anti-Semites but might become that since they are under the influence of anti-Semitism. Because if we do not argue, they may perhaps think that every non-Jew is basically an anti-Semite or at least more or less that. Our open arguments make it clear that this is not true, that the condemnation of anti-Semitism is supported by many non-Jews.

Péter Hanák: I should add that the whole process of transition entails certain risks. Miklós Szabó is right that our arguments serve to persuade in the first place those who are not anti-Semites. But there is something else. Even though we shall not persuade the anti-Semites, yet the possibility for them to express what is on their minds, and debating

openly without being silenced by administrative methods, will probably enlarge their trust in liberalism and reduce the destructive effect of the feeling of hatred.

Finally let us now pass over to the last question. Let us relate the problems of integration and dissimilation to the expedients and ways of solution we may suggest. For example how far has the re-integration of Jews into Hungarian society progressed since the Second World War?

Gyula Juhász: It seems we have forgotten somehow to deal with another factor. When speaking of dissimilation, we use this notion in a rather general way as if it were true of all Hungarian Jews. I am of the opinion that the right to total assimilation—because it is very important from the point of view of the future—must be stressed also in respect of the Jews of Hungary. The times are past when, owing to the war, Jews could not assimilate nationally in Hungary, and so they tried to assimilate to the Communist Party and the working-class movement. Why should one not recognise the right of a man of Jewish origin, in the same way as that of a man of German or Slav origin, to feel Hungarian? What mark or sign of identification can determine whether a person is to be considered a Jew or a non-Jew?

Viktor Karády: There are many sides to this issue. I should single out one of them: in terms of Jewish thinking, integration is far advanced or has ended. The vast majority of Hungarian Jews think of themselves as Hungarian. Of course, this process already came to an end for the most part during the old régime; thus a Hungarian sense of identity was combined quite early with a Jewish sense of identity. In the present situation I have to say that Jewry hardly exists at all as a tangible, objectified group visible in the social sphere, as a group conscious of its identity. Or rather—I should so reformulate this—identity exists only in the mind, and not in social reality. There is much talk, mainly among anti-Semites, of Jewish lobbies, about isolation and such things. Of course, in every group with a sense of identity there are inclinations to isolation, which are founded simply on common tastes, on family relations and, very strongly, on common attitudes to history. Jewish dissimilation observable today has, I think, a novel element for the historical consciousness of Jewry is rebuilt and manifested by the new generation. The consciousness of the Jewish past, including the persecutions, is a tremendous factor, which in fact separates Jewish thinking objectively from that of non-Jews.

We are speaking of the solution of ques-

tions, but I don't think that anything is doubtful here. If there really is a problem to be solved, it can only be that non-Jews take notice of the fact that attitudes to history and, within that, the collective memory of persecutions in the thinking of Jews, are indelible. This will be true for a long time to come, probably for ever, and must be accepted. I should add all the same that the differentness attributed to Jews exists in no form whatever—I repeat myself—except in the mind, but this is very important. It is necessary to recognise the right of people to have a sense of identity of their own, a group consciousness. They are entitled to that. Of course, this requires liberal publicity of the European type.

One reason why Jews are better integrated

Miklós Szabó: One reason why Jews are better integrated today is that in the 1970s Hungarian society integrated capitalism. Business, undertaking, are today highly respected social behaviour. There is no longer any absurdity in our friend László Varga's view earlier thought scandalous that the industrialist Manfréd Weiss was one of the greatest personalities of modern Hungarian history. In the society of private trade and enterprise established during the 1970s Jews are not over-represented any longer, not even amongst boutique owners, as many would still think.

There is now a covert charge and prejudice against Jewish intellectuals because there is a critical, sceptical and sarcastic type of the intelligentsia which is made up not entirely of Jews but includes many of them, and which views things with a certain detachment, is held responsible for the fact that after 1956 the Kádár régime was the only one of the people's democracies not to have developed an official nationalism. Certain intellectuals moulding public opinion still remember this, and this confirms their prejudices and passions.

Finally, what Viktor Karády has already mentioned, namely anti-Semitism as a career-lobby ideology, is probably the most frequently encountered form of present anti-Semitism. The ruse of the thing is only that lobbying takes place in a wholly integrated medium. The members of all lobbies are functionaries of the same sort, officials of the same sort, who essentially want to make their fortune in the same manner and at the same place. In practice these are matters of a political character, and what is really wrong and unwholesome is not so much the career-

lobby, which is a fact by and large inescapable in any community of civil servants, but rather the exceedingly strong prejudice and resentment against it. To use a frivolous example: adultery is obviously a deviancy in a society practicing monogamy, but hostility to adultery based on a prudish fundamentalism is probably more unwholesome than adultery itself.

Péter Hanák: We have reached the end of our discussion. We have described a condition, interpreting the opinions of some people, and we do not pretend that we try to represent the general opinion of historians. As I mentioned by way of introduction: the time of self-examination, which chose or might have chosen the years 1938–44 as its subjects, has passed. This should have been done earlier, there is no way of correcting things now. This does not mean that we could not tackle the matter openly, calmly, in a fair manner and in earnest, in keeping with present conditions and with responsibility. What is more, a kind of collective analysis is of significance even today. It is never too late to carry out such an analysis when we have to talk over a vexing problem, a boxed-up trauma.

Hungarian society must accept that a dual attachment, a pluralism of traditions, is possible, that there are in Hungary people having different pasts and different traditions. Jews have their own traditions and vital experience. This has led to some differences in ways of thinking. All this does not affect loyalty to the Hungarian nation. Our entire world is progressing towards the acceptance of dual and multiple attachments, in respect of one's belonging to a nation and a class, to a nation and a religion. Let us follow the Hungarians' basic position originating with the Magyars who conquered this land and their King Stephen, that tolerance which was able, for centuries, to accept and integrate different loyalties, different opinions and traditions in the Hungarian national community.

Finally, the sensitivity—understandable in historical and human terms—present among Jews must also be habituated to pluralism. Pluralism, especially after the years of repression and prohibition, involves the clash and struggle of opinions where real views and passions, and not views adapted to party rules come into collision. Arguments, arguments and again arguments are needed, and not orders coming from above, from the monopolistic power apparatus, in order to reach agreement on the Jewish question as well. As far as I can see an inclination to do so is present among democrats.

Nowadays there is much talk everywhere about national self-esteem. This demand is included in the common programme of the opposition organizations, too. And with good reason. In this century the sense of Hungarian identity has suffered really serious defeats, distortions, obligatorily celebrated subordinations, self-reductions and slights. One of the factors destroying self-esteem was this anti-Semitism which plunged the Jews of this country into the most awful catastrophe of its history and also added to the Hungarian tragedy. This anti-Semitism did not go well with the traditions of Hungarian tolerance and liberalism of the European type and did not fit into the self-image of Hungarian love of freedom, equality and humanity. That the

intertwining of the Hungarian and the Jewish tragedy—in a sense the awareness of a common fate—could not become a source of national self-esteem can be attributed precisely to the conspiracy of silence, to oblivion of the past and to the unelucidated nature of the relationship, in no small measure to the surviving embers of anti-Semitism which recently flared up. Our current debates and the conversation we have just had may convince the supporters of renewal that injured and disturbed national self-esteem, democratic and humane national self-esteem, cannot be restored on the basis of the resuscitation or quiet toleration of anti-Semitism, or on the basis of hatred for any other people or ethnic group.

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Transylvania—Revolution in Rumania—Solzhenitsyn—Falklands 1921
Freedom of Information—Lost in Russia—Shift to a Free Economy—1956
Lined up and Shot—Good-bye Censorship—Fireside Liszt
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GYÖRGY KONRÁD

Show me your eyes

What has priority? That we were there in Central Europe, or that we were more or less eradicated there? My kind of stubborn optimist thinks of our presence as more decisive than our annihilation. Or is this just the egocentricity of the survivor?

In all likelihood the Jews thought of the geographical centre of Europe as an interesting place. A place where a network of connections could be built up, where a booming commodity trade could be carried on, factories could be built and banks established. The Jews living in Hungaria became Magyars by preference. They adopted the language and made themselves at home in it. They wrote poetry, philosophised, reported, discoursed, traded, gave treatment, acted, sang, joked, made love, quarrelled, prayed in Hungarian, and all this came naturally to them quite quickly. Others celebrate an invasion, we the exodus. There were places, however, which the Jews were rather reluctant to leave. Hungarian Jews, emancipated thanks to the liberal attitude of the nobility, clung tooth and nail to a Hungaria of a motley national composition with a stubbornness beyond reason and an attachment bordering on the sensuous. They enthusiastically committed themselves to the progress of the country. They did their bit, and it was far from insignificant, to turn Budapest into a modern metropolis. It appeared that their environment was in need of Jewish doctors and businessmen, industrialists and scientists, artists and tradesmen, entertainers and whores. It was from Hungary that Jews emigrated the least willingly. What was this strange attachment not only to the Danube-Tisza region but also to the Hungarian nation, the receptive majority?

Learned fathers continued in learned sons. For two thousand years the school was the Jewish house of worship. It was natural that the people of the book did well at school. When emancipation became law, the Jewish communities flourished. Wherever success was measurable by some abstract yardstick, Jewish boys and girls made good progress. Those who are always in the news risk people not standing them. The Jews bothered a good deal about what other people thought of them, but did not give much thought to themselves, to their attempt to coexist with others and to all that accompanied their upward social mobility. They hoped that the letter of the law would secure their equal rights. For a time it did, then it did not. Yesterday's laws can be repealed the next day under the pressure of public opinion, and the citizens with equal rights can be turned into pariahs, inmates of concentration camps, wearers of a striped prisoner's uniform, and all legally and within the bounds of a constitutional state. They took their illusions for reality, although the history of the Jews entitles them to be suspicious. Their vigilance was average, therefore inadequate. The liberal Jews managed to forget that the pogroms as popular celebrations might yet be revived on a level of a more advanced technology. Only the Zionists warned against that eventuality and reminded the Jews that if they did not defend themselves, nobody else would. Their warnings were to prove right. Many more Jews could have survived

National Socialism had there been a state to take them. In the 30s Hitler surrendered the majority of them and would have put them on ships. For their wholesale destruction responsibility lies with the murderers in the first place, in the second with those who surrendered them, and in the third with those who refused to offer them refuge. But if I do not look on ourselves as helpless creatures, soulless inanimate objects, but, on the contrary, I look upon ourselves as individuals in their own right then I am much more concerned with our own responsibility.

My Hungarian speaking grandparents' grandparents, who lived in the Hungarian Kingdom within the Habsburg Empire did not think of themselves as metics. In this country before the Great War the Jews were citizens with equal rights along with Rumanians and Serbs, the Slovaks and Germans, the Croats and Ukrainians. They could be what they wanted to be: Hungarian-speaking Jews, Hungarians of the Jewish faith or for that matter baptised Hungarian Jews, patriots of Hungaria, emancipated subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the extent to which they were devoted and interested members of this Central European cultural and political nation. But following the Great War, the revolutions and counterrevolutions we Jews—together with the Gypsies—became unwelcome guests in a Hungary reduced to one third of its territory by the Peace Treaty of Trianon. We were insistently and emphatically reminded that we were an alien element. Previously we seem to have been too forgetful of our status as metics. We were then to learn that the law was not all. It was quite possible to wipe us from the face of the earth legally, by meticulously drafted regulations.

My uncles were much decorated officers of the K. und K. army. Some of them acted recklessly, played cards, or the violin, caroused and sang almost like any of the Hungarian country gentlemen of the time. It seems to have been both more and less than behaviour commensurate with the guest status. It is not easy to strike a delicate balance as between adjustment and differentiation. Tactful coexistence implies a lifetime of learning. One has to master the proper manner of the passenger or the guest. The more mature Jews attempted something of this sort in that process of rapprochement in the course of which overhasty adjustment received its proper reward, and so did a stubborn insistence on being different. Naturally, the more mature Jews also got theirs for their balancing act.

After the war the old Jew who instructed me in the faith said to me: "Learn, my son, how a passenger has to behave. A sensible traveller has something to offer to his fellows, he can take care of children, the old, and the helpless, and always of those at his side. A passenger must be magnanimous but at the same time reserved. He should not compete with the locals in their noisy frolics. He should treat his servant gently and offer gifts to his hosts but keep his hatchet ready at hand. The passenger's heart is not glad because he feels that something is afoot. He reckons with the fact that in their place which, drunk with wine he thought of as a lasting refuge, he is a stranger. He now laughs much but there will be a time of moaning too. If he thinks things over carefully; there are not many here he can trust. He is kind and cautious with others, inwardly firm and a seeker of the truth. He always bears in mind that his true home is the road.

National emancipation does not put an end to the mutual dependence and solidarity of the Jewish communities scattered worldwide. The Jews did not tell the truth, however sincerely they wished to believe it that they wanted to be Hungarians, Germans, French just like the rest except that they were of the Hebrew faith. They did not tell the truth to themselves either. Complete assimilation—whether as an

outward need or as a Jewish promise—was not realistic. It was a sort of fatal imbecility and debasement that French and German Jews slaughtered each other in the Great War. I watched Uncle Andor with his *Signum Laudis*: he went from pillar to post in the summer of 1944, without any success, hoping to obtain the papers of exempted Jews. His erstwhile prowess as a soldier had turned into grotesque favouring as reflected by passing time. Willy-nilly, there had come about a connection between all too eager adjustment and the mass graves. Giving up a Jewish sense of identity was too high a price to pay for equal citizen rights. It makes no difference what you believe about yourself, you are a Jew, a disruptive and noxious element, you don't belong amongst us, so said the framers of the anti-Jewish laws, first those of Nuremberg, then their epigones. And the oracles of the super race and of their satellite nations said: your assimilation is superficial and fake, you will never be one of us. Neither your appearance nor your style will ever have roots like ours. You have grown too confident, you have made your pile, and you want to get on top of us. Perhaps we expected you to become assimilated yesterday; we no longer desire it. You are a question which has to be solved. The simplest solution would be if you left. If you don't leave, things might get that bad that we might have to kill you. Crafty Jews don't lead us into temptation.

When more and more non-Jewish intellectuals were of the opinion that there was a Jewish question, or even that it was *the* most important issue of all, crying for a solution, then it was only a matter of time and logical consistency to get from there to the gas chambers. Once the machinery of the solution is put in motion, who is there to call a halt before the Final Solution? The bishop who moved the bill in Parliament to restrict the Jews can wash his hands of it even in after life. The Parliamentary session will remain on the record for all time. The legislators will be enveloped for ever by the stench of the crematoria. The antecedents cannot be separated from the consequences.

The expellers called things by their own names more sharply than the assimilated. The latter wrung their hands and accepted the romanticism of sacrifice, which was culpable irresponsibility. Auschwitz is there behind every Jew. The murder of children cannot be passed over in silence. One does not refuse solidarity with those with whom one was meant to be burnt in the same furnace. The corpses can be counted. A disconsolate accounting. Many more of us were killed than the murderers among us have ever killed. The Germans found plenty of willing assistants and accomplices for their actions amongst the Austrians and the Poles, the Lithuanians and the Ukrainians, the Hungarians and the Rumanians, the Croats and the Slovaks. By their behaviour the majority of people expressed that they did not wish to risk anything to ensure the survival of the Jews.

I have often encountered the view that the East European adventure of the Jews has virtually come to an end. There is no considerable Jewish community living in the rest of Eastern Europe. Most recently it was from Poland that the Jews were forced to emigrate at the end of the 60s, demonstrating that antisemitism camouflaged as anti-Zionism can be raised to the level of state policy even in a socialist country. Many have left Hungary too, in successive waves, but over half of those of the survivors and of those born after the war have remained. There are virtually no Jews left in the provinces but after Moscow and Paris Budapest is the third largest Jewish community on the continent of Europe, close to a hundred thousand, or more, if half-Jews are included. And those who left keep on coming back.

There would have been Stalinism in Eastern Europe without the Jews but it must be said in fairness that the Communist Jews actively promoted the integration of the area into the socialist camp planned by Stalin. This connection has since turned sour and the emigration of Soviet Jews started. In the post-war years, however, a far from negligible part of the surviving Jews in their antifascist fervour became tools of Stalin's policies. There have been Jews who did cruel things as officers of the security police. It should be mentioned however that there were quite a few Jews among those interrogated, and not just among the interrogators, and not even the most depraved security men went as far as eradicating children. Where there were no Jews left, the new administration was taken care of by non-Jews. Stalinism made use of a good many Jews but at the same time it demonstrated that they were far from indispensable. In this part of the world the Jews were made responsible for capitalism and communism alike. However, the asphyxiation of my nieces can be justified by neither capitalism nor the shadow cast ahead by Communism.

Of the Jews of my village most of the men who had survived did not choose that road. The greater part went to Israel. Those who joined the Communist Party mostly continued what they had been doing before: they remained produce merchants or estate stewards, only this time at the head of a state company or state farm. Others were just barely tolerated as class-alien citizens. And there were some who, having been deprived of their livelihood by some law of the state, moved to Budapest, took some modest state job and tried to lie low, but one fine day in the summer of 1951 a policeman came and served them an official writ that they were to be resettled from Budapest that very evening. Their enforced domicile was to be some unknown Great Plains village. Pack! A truck would be sent to fetch them and their families that evening. Everything except necessities was to be left behind. Their furniture, their books, their shirts all went into the possession and use of the tenant moving in. The new is going to replace the old, that was tirelessly repeated in those days.

In the past half a century there has been much fear and little cooperation along the Danube. In this region the mental reflexes of instruction and submission are overwhelming, while the political culture of self-determination is scanty indeed. There has been much anxiety and little solidarity. The unknown subject showed little curiosity in the truth whereas inflated caution was rewarded by a morocco binding. In Budapest in the past decade it was the men of the underground who have showed the most solidarity for each other, even when this got them into trouble. And where something forbidden is uttered, there you are sure to find a few Jews. There has always been a minority who did something for their fellow men in jeopardy, and since solidarity is an asset that can be increased, it would be an unjust exaggeration to assert that there is no place for us in Central Europe.

There are some enlightened citizens who do not loathe their fellow men just because they are what they are. Many Hungarian Jews have proved that they want to live here even after all this. They do not feel any inclination to declare themselves refugees. Some few minority groups of this passionate description also try to do something in order that their city should become interested in rather than wary of the different. They do good to their city if they try to be happy in the spiritual skin of difference. Perhaps the day will come when the Messiah steals past under our windows and history quickens its pace in his wake. Then minds will come to live, strange encounters multiply, the grip of routine will be broken and every day will bring us something new. Then students will take each other's arms so tightly that they can no longer be easily separated. The smile that will fill the whole city will swallow the

threats. Perhaps the day will dawn when the schoolchildren show evidence of accelerating progress in the one crucial subject of the human school: understanding each other. And the unknown Messiah, walking the pavements, with his well-worn briefcase under his arm, will not consider whether the man whose forehead he touches is a Jew, a Christian, or a Muslim, he will only look to see what there is in his eyes.

György Konrád's novels and essays, after ten years of samizdat, but translated into many languages, now appear in quick succession in Hungary.



As I remember

A conversation with the widow of Pál Maléter

"There is, in the end, after life's many disappointments, some pleasure in the thought of leaving healthy, honest, and intelligent children behind one. But not, of course, for them to be pursued like rats, with gas, or made to die some other heroic death."

From a letter from Pál Maléter's father, Dr István Maléter, to Oszkár Jászi, 23rd of December 1930.

Bill Lomax's book on 1956 describes how Pál Maléter became the legendary hero of the revolution. He had been sent to the Kilián barracks to ensure the neutrality of the troops quartered there. After demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the vicinity, which had seen heavy fighting and casualties, he informed the Minister of Defence that he would order that fire be opened on the first Soviet tank that entered the sector.*

How much more do you as his widow, the person closest to him at the time, know of the circumstances in which he changed sides?

I am afraid I haven't read the book, but the dates are correct. It certainly happened on the 26th or 27th of October, 1956. I first became aware of it when we spoke on the telephone. I said, "Pali, I ask just one thing of you. If you see that it's honest working people that you're facing—don't shoot." With some amusement in his voice he answered, "Well, you'll be hearing about it!" I'd said what I did because I'd been in Bem tér on the 23rd of October and I had seen that it wasn't simply a rabble in action as they later tried to make everyone believe. And my sisters had been at the Radio when they fired into the crowd. They had helped to carry away the wounded. But anyway, a few days later I understood what he had been hinting at on the phone. When the Western radio stations were talking a lot about the Kilián barracks, and suddenly started to mention his name as well, I was very surprised—and at the same time very glad.

Why were you surprised?

Because I hadn't been sure where he stood. As a disciplined, died-in-the-wool soldier, who had fought both at the front and as a partisan, he had at first been appalled at the idea of civilians breaking into barracks that were under his command. In fact I don't like the phrase "changing sides". It's more correct to say that he was on the side of the revolution, the uprising, I can accept that. I can't accept "changing sides", because it isn't true. He had taken an oath to defend the Hungarian people. In 1956 he was convinced that it was the people who were taking up arms, there and then. The path he took was always straight and honourable. If I think back to much earlier, to what went before, I have to say—if this still has any positive sense — that he was a patriot and a Hungarian, in the noblest sense of those words.

What earlier times are you thinking of?

In 1939 he moved to Hungary from the Charles University in Prague to continue his medical studies. After the Vienna Award there had been a sudden surge of anti-Hungarian feeling which made life increasingly difficult for Hungarian students in Prague as well. I also know that when the Felvidék was rejoined to Hungary right up to the Kassa environs under the terms of the Vienna Award, he was extremely upset that Eperjes, his native region, was not

* Bill Lomax: *Hungary 1956*. Allison L. Busby, London 1976.

On June 15th, 1958, Prime Minister Imre Nagy and some of his colleagues, the journalist Miklós Gimes and the Minister of Defence Pál Maléter, were sentenced to death having been found guilty of attempting to overthrow the People's Republic. The head of the prime minister's secretariat, József Szilágyi, had been tried, sentenced and executed in April. Géza Losonczy had died in unexplained circumstances on 21st December, 1957, during police investigations. All other defendants involved in the Nagy trial received heavy prison sentences. The death sentences were carried out on the 16th of June, 1958. The last information given to the public on Imre Nagy and his colleagues was on the 24th of November, 1956, when they were said to have been taken to Rumania. During 1957 leading political figures, including János Kádár, repeatedly made attempts to reassure the public that Imre Nagy would return to political life. The daily papers announced the executions on the 17th of June, including that of Szilágyi, who had in fact been executed on April 23rd.

Imre Nagy, his colleagues, and others figuring in the revolution, along with their families, had taken up an offer of asylum from the Yugoslav government and had sought refuge in the Yugoslav embassy on November 4th, 1956, the day Soviet troops returned to Hungary to suppress the revolution. Ultimately a bilateral agreement was reached between the new Hungarian and

Yugoslav governments, under whose terms the Hungarian government promised immunity and a laissez-passer to those in the embassy. When they left however on 22nd November, they were not allowed to go to their homes, but forcibly removed to a Soviet military barracks and thence to Snagov in Rumania; there were 37 of them in all, including women and children. In April 1957, Imre Nagy and his future co-defendants, as well as those who were to be defendants in other trials, were arrested in Snagov by the Hungarian secret police and taken to Budapest. They were kept in solitary confinement up to the end of their trials and their execution.

Pál Maléter, who was born in 1917, was a career army officer; he had been trained as a partisan when he was a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union, he then parachuted behind the German lines. In the first days of the revolution he was appointed commander of the Kilián Barracks to restore order among the soldiers, many of whom sympathised with the insurgents; he, in turn, supported them. On November 2nd Imre Nagy appointed him Minister of Defence. On November 3rd he led the Hungarian government delegation that met the Soviet military commanders to discuss the conditions for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. On that very day, during the meeting, they were arrested by General Serov of the KGB. They were kept in custody in Budapest until their execution.

included. The young people in the area demanded a kind of local referendum, as had happened in Sopron. They were hoping for a fairer settlement. When we went to Eperjes in 1954, to his parents' house, he went over to a standing clock, opened the case, and pulled out the little rosettes and hastily written pamphlets they had distributed at the time, and which he had hidden away even then. I've kept them carefully ever since. His family had been so anxious for him not to choose an army career—seeing the attraction it had for him from early childhood—that when father (who taught law at the University) was on his deathbed he made him promise to become a doctor. In 1943 he graduated from the Ludovika, and was sent as a second lieutenant to Kassa and from there to the front line.

Bill Lomax's book also says that he wore his partisan colours throughout the revolution, and counted himself a communist. Do you know anything about how Pál Maléter, a graduate of the Ludovika Military Academy, came to attend the partisan-training school in Moscow?

Two things may have motivated him. As a Hungarian partisan he would be able to fight against the Germans; then they were promised that they would be able to form their own Kossuth Brigade, entirely made up of Hungarians. The plan, and the promise was that if this brigade fought to the end of the war on the Russian side, the former Northern Hungary and Northern Transylvania would remain as part of Hungary. (However, Stalin did not approve the formation of the Kossuth Brigade.) Zoltán Vas personally sought out Maléter in the

prisoner of war camp and tried to talk him into signing up for the anti-fascist school. At first he didn't want anything to do with it, but Vas suggested that he at least go there to have a look and see what it was about before making up his mind. I should say that my husband spoke almost with hatred about the German army. It had been his unit that had covered the German withdrawal. He told me how they had had a couple of trucks left, which they had loaded with Hungarian wounded, but the Germans took the vehicles from them, and simply threw the wounded men off them. They also kicked off those who tried to hang on. You can imagine how he felt about that as someone whose men meant everything to him! It was experiences like this which influenced his decision in the prison-camp. The school trained him as a parachutist partisan and he was dropped behind the German lines. I'm afraid I don't remember everything. I only have patchy memories about all this now—I didn't think I would ever be asked about it again—but one thing I do remember is that he made his way to the headquarters of Hungarian regiments, armed only with a knife in his boot, told them he was a partisan, and demanded that they either turn round and fight the Germans, or else disband their units. The Russians had timed this to coincide with the Hungarian withdrawal from the war, and Horthy's proclamation. However this happened later than planned — in fact too late. I am emphasising these events now because there were people who thought he was a traitor for doing this. But the things he did as a partisan were nothing less than dicing with death: just imagine him going to a Hungarian regiment at that time and telling the Commanding Officer to engage with the enemy at once. . . Sometimes they did disband their units as a result of his work, but at other times they had him taken out to a maize-field, where the soldiers would motion to him to start running and then fire shots over his head. He never knew whether he owed his life to the Commanding Officer or to his escort.

As a professional officer he naturally considered the Germans to be an occupying army from 19th March, 1944 onwards, and wanted to fight against them at the first available opportunity. When I asked him in 1956 what he thought of the Russians, he said, "Look, I regarded them as liberators in 1945, but now, after 12 years, I consider them to be just as much an occupying army as the Germans were." That's why I say that his path was always a straight one. He always, always, fought for Hungary against any occupying army, for him the interests of Hungary were always paramount. The first time I heard him called a "careerist", I wondered what anyone could possibly mean by it. Did they think he thought, Oh look, here's the revolution, I'd better support it, then I'll be able to get something out of it later? Or that he, a highly-trained soldier with a couple of hundred untrained—and virtually unarmed—soldiers in the Kilián barracks, couldn't assess what our real chances were against the Russian forces pouring into the country?

He also knew that there was no chance of any help coming from the West. He was so sure of this that he even told western journalists, if I may quote from Bill Lomax again, that if any western volunteers wished to cross the Austrian border and join in our struggle, we would very politely but very firmly ask them to desist, the border guards of Hungary, a country now fighting for its freedom, have orders to make any such volunteers withdraw.

Yes, that is supported by what the British military attaché told me of his visit to the Kilián barracks. He asked what help they could offer. Pali answered, "I have always held the British people in high esteem, and that esteem will increase in direct proportion to your moral support." And his emphasis was on 'moral support'. Many people who don't know that the Russians arrested him at Tököl when he had come to take part in talks as the Minister of Defence of the Hungarian government, ask me why he didn't get out to the West in time. I always answer by saying that even if he had been able to, and hadn't fallen victim to that act of unparalleled duplicity, he still wouldn't have left this country. Only if I'd knocked him down, tied him up and somehow dragged him over the border. I am quite certain of that! He was quite clear about his position in 1956, too, and had no desire for any other post. It was a kind of holy madness that drove him, nothing else.

There is one question that a lot of people asked since then: what sort of feeling did Pál Maléter have when he went to the Tököl meeting as a member of the national government?

On the morning of November 3rd the agreement on the withdrawal of Russian troops was signed in Parliament. (The Soviet delegation of seven generals was headed by Malinin.) After that he came home, had a shower and changed; he was very happy. Towards evening he rang up again, and our conversation was interrupted by Mindszenty's statement on the radio. When he rang back again he said that the talks were going to be continued that evening at the Soviet Headquarters in Tököl. I was terribly anxious, and almost begged him not to go. He tried to reassure me, and reminded me that under the rules of diplomacy, the other side could decide the place and the time of the continuation of the talks. The Russians had said Tököl, at 10 p.m. As I said, he considered the Russians to be an occupying army, but he never supposed that they would arrest the legal and official military representative. However, he was uneasy. I was later told by his aide de camp, who had been in the room with him when we had our telephone conversation, that he paced nervously up and down the room afterwards. The aide de camp asked him, "Major General, do you think something might go wrong this evening?" And Pali answered, "Well, I must say there have been talks I have felt more at ease about." "Then don't go," suggested the aide de camp. "I can't do that," said Maléter. "At this moment I cannot take my wife or family into account, I must go even if it costs me my life. The country is expecting me to do what I can." Those are the events that led up to that monstrous deed, which in my view is without parallel in recent history.

The writer Tibor Déry once said to me, "You know, I think he simply didn't have the constitution of a politician or a diplomat. He was like cast-iron which breaks sooner than it bends."

Did you ever have a chance to talk with him about how your premonitions had come true, how right you had been to beg him not to go?

No, never. Our first meeting in prison was so suffocating we couldn't say anything for a long time, we just sat and held hands. The detective who was watching us reminded us loudly that this counted as part of the 20 minutes. So I quickly started to tell him the thing most important for him to know, which was that his first wife had left for the West with his children. He was very upset. After all, it meant he had lost his children. The detective interrupted us, saying we weren't allowed to talk about that because it was political. I don't know how political it is to tell a father about his children.

Did he change in prison, did they break him?

No. He was very hard. The expression on his face was one of sheer tension and rejection, except when he was talking to me.

When did you last see him?

On 8th of May, 1957. I had asked for a 'visit' on that day because it was our third wedding anniversary, and—miraculously—I had got it. I took him some coffee in a thermos, and some oranges, which had been on sale in the shops on May 1st. I still have the peel of the oranges he ate that day. We were left on our own for a few minutes, because the detective was called away, and Pali quickly said who I should go and see. I remember what a reassuring feeling that gave me, as I had been to see all of them already. I'd been so full of worries and doubts about who I could turn to. He mentioned three names, Sándor Nógrádi, Gyula Rác, and a third, which I can't remember now but a person who I know I had been to see. And then he said, "I may even be home by July." I don't know what had given him that hope, how they could have misled him so. But I was never allowed to see him again. In September I got his last letter. I've never kept a diary, but I have a notebook from that time full of notes such as "Asked for a visit." "Didn't get it." "Asked for permission to write." "Didn't get it." "My letter wasn't accepted." "Didn't get permission for a parcel."

Did Sándor Nógrádi help you?

He once asked me, "Do you know how long Jacob waited for Rachel?" I was very surprised. There are a lot of people whom I would expect to quote the Bible, but not him. He also said how long his wife had had to wait when he had gone into exile and she couldn't join him. I concluded from that—although for some reason he didn't want to say so explicitly—there was nothing I could do but wait.

And his other relatives? Who did you keep in touch with?

As you know, they dragged the others off to Rumania. I later met Aliz Halda, the girl Miklós Gimes lived with. Tildy and his family were here, and I used to talk to them before they were taken away.

What did you know about the trial at the time?

Nothing. Nothing whatsoever. In the winter of 1957–58 I made several vigorous protests to the effect that it was inhuman of them not to let me see him. I always had to apply to the same detective for permission. I was there endlessly. One day, after one of my outbursts, he snapped back, “What d’you think you’re being so uppity about? Be glad we didn’t hang him in November!”

Had you had hope until then?

Oh, yes. Because by that time János Kádár had consolidated his position. They had locked up, and executed a huge number of people, and by 1958 he was firmly in power. If they hadn’t executed the leaders of the revolution immediately, to make an example of them, then it didn’t seem logical or sensible that they would do so two years later. So I had reason to hope. I went to see the Chief Judge Advocate and said, “Surely you don’t want another Rajk trial?” He jumped up so violently that he knocked over his chair, and shouted, “How can you say that?” These were the things that kept my spirits up.

Do you now know why they did those terrible things two years later?

The reasons are starting to come out. The political situation at the time was that China

As Chief of Staff, General István Kovács was one of the Hungarian delegates who, on November 3rd 1956 at Tököl, were arrested by the Soviet Army whom they had gone to negotiate with. He was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment, and was released under an amnesty in 1960. He then, until retirement, earned his living first as a storekeeper, then as a translator. Excerpt from an interview:

We were given instructions by Imre Nagy. A Soviet delegation was arriving and we were to discuss with them the principles and details of the Soviet withdrawal from the country. Early in the morning we went up to the Prime Minister’s Office in order to ask for more specific instructions, and the negotiating party was then set up. It was composed of Pál Maléter, myself, and Colonel Miklós Szücs, who had earlier been my deputy before being appointed head of the operational staff on November 2nd. I told Imre Nagy that, since this was certainly also a political matter, it would be good to have a politician join us. Ferenc Erdei happened to be present, he had no departmental duties. He was thus appointed the fourth member of the Hungarian delegation.

At the morning conference lasting an hour an agreement in principle was reached on the withdrawal of troops, as far as could be foreseen, by January 15th. We agreed to resume negotiations in the evening since the Soviets had financial claims. They said they had no adequate supplies of

fuel and no winter clothing, insufficient food and rolling stock. An understanding was conditional upon our settling these matters to enable the troops to withdraw undisturbed.

In what sort of atmosphere did the negotiations take place?

We aimed to come to an agreement in a courteous and friendly atmosphere. I felt they did not think of us as enemies. Three of us in the Hungarian delegation certainly owed our careers to the Soviet Army. All three of us spoke Russian well, so we needed no interpreter. Minutes were also kept at the meeting.

Who headed the Russian party?

General of the Army Malinin.

In other words before you parted, you agreed on carrying on with the talks.

Yes, to be specific, we were to talk again that same evening at the Soviet army headquarters in Tököl.

This was in accordance with the rules of the diplomatic game as well.

Yes, it was. Now here, now there. That is common practice.

wanted it to happen. Khrushchev also wanted to demonstrate a strong-arm policy to the Yugoslavs. I once heard a terrible story that Khrushchev announced, "Imre Nagy and Pál Maléter must die, that's for certain. And two more, as well." He didn't care which two. That's why Miklós Gimes had to die. And they counted József Szilágyi as one of the four, as well, though he had been dead a long time. They had killed him in April. As a defendant he had behaved so much as if he were the prosecutor that it had been intolerable to them, even in a secret trial.

Did you find out that they'd carried out the sentence from the newspaper?

Almost. But the Lord spared me that. My sister and her family were listening to the early morning news on that day, the 17th of June. She and her husband threw themselves into a taxi, to catch me before I left home. They told the taxi-driver why they were hurrying and to whom. It still astonishes me that the taxi-driver, a grown man, started to cry. I was just about to leave when my sister and her husband arrived at the door, and stood there without speaking. "Good God! Is something the matter?" I asked after everyone in the family before it occurred to me to ask about Pali. To this day I don't understand how it could have happened without my sensing it. At the end of February and the beginning of March 1958 I had been terribly agitated; I endlessly pestered the lawyer who had been appointed to us, Tibor Révay, asking him if anything was the matter with my husband. He always said something like, "Nothing, nothing at all, you're imagining things. I'll let you know as soon as something happens." I didn't trust that notorious character, so I used to go and sit outside the Gyorskocsi utca prison, outside

What happened next in the order of the day's events?

We left and did our work. And before going out to Tököl, we met Maléter at Kilián Barracks. Before leaving, as I remember, the Kilián commandant warned Maléter that there might be trouble, we ought to be careful not to let ourselves be caught in a trap. But Maléter insisted that we had to negotiate, we must not back down! He kept reassuring those getting anxious: there could be no kind of trouble. His uniform, just like mine, sported the ribbons of Soviet decorations. He said he had been awarded them for having fought against fascism, and he wore them with pride. In the course of the conversation he stated several times that he was a socialist, he wanted socialism in Hungary. I think it is important to make this clear.

Who else joined the Hungarian negotiating group?

We took specialists who were versed in questions of detail and would be able to answer questions that might be raised; that is to say: officers of the army supply depot, our liaison man from the State Railways.

As you were going out of town, what could you tell of the situation?

Everything seemed calm and peaceful. Today I know it was a calm before the storm. Nowhere were we held up. We arrived at Tököl about ten o'clock.

Were you received with open arms in the Soviet barrack?

The sentries stopped us at the gate, but when it became clear who we were and what we had come for, a soldier joined us and saw us to the building where the commanders were staying.

What happened thereafter? Did you simply walk into the mousetrap?

We were shown into the conference room which Malinin entered in a few minutes in the company of three or four generals. They greeted us and bade us to sit down. But hardly had we sat down when the doors sprang open and a number of NKVD officers burst into the room.

In uniform?

Yes.

Was General Serov one of them?

We only found out later which of them he was. We had not known him earlier. They declared that we were under arrest, we must surrender our arms! Maléter protested energetically, saying we were members of an official government delegation, but they ignored him and seized his gun within moments. Why, there was nothing to be done. The plain truth is that the situation was so fantastic. The last time such things were done had been in Hungary under Ottoman rule.

Magyar Nemzet, 21 August, 1989. Béla Kurcz's interview with István Kovács.

the Ministry of the Interior, watched out for police vans in the street, and went from one church to another, praying on my knees. My faith in God was stronger then than it had ever been before. It turned out later that that was when the trial had started, which they later had to break off because the presiding judge had a heart attack; so they had a break till June. If the beginning of the trial, which I had absolutely no knowledge of, had affected my nerves so badly, how was it possible that I didn't feel anything now? Because it wasn't true! That was the simple conclusion I drew. If it had really happened I would have known about it. I didn't deny it straight away, though. I broke down first. . . My father, István Gyenes, was still in prison at the time. They had time. They had sentenced him in 1957 for being a member of the Baranya District Workers' Council. The trial had been talked about all over the country, they had tried 19 people together. My mother and sister lost their jobs and of course I did too.

I don't suppose a lot of people stood by you at the time.

Well, then I, who had always felt that as long I was with Pali I didn't care if the whole world collapsed, I would still feel alright, now found myself in a kind of vacuum. They had taken away our flat at the beginning of 1957, the home I had loved so much, and where I had felt so secure. The belief that he was still alive was the only thing that connected me to the outside world. Earlier I had tried not to think that *that* could happen too, that they could execute him, and of course the more you try to get rid of a thought, the more difficult it is to shake it off. But I denied even the possibility of this happening, or at the most just thought that I wouldn't want to survive him. So in fact my disbelief was a sort of self-preservation instinct. But actually there were a lot of other things that reinforced hope in me as well. A young woman came to see me one day, and introduced herself as Aliz Halda, she lived with Miklós Gimes. She was made of sterner stuff than me, and asked the officials where Gimes's last letter was, and why they hadn't allowed a last prison visit. They said that of course every condemned man was allowed one, but it looked as if Miklós Gimes hadn't made use of it; Mrs Maléter had been in, for instance, and had said goodbye to her husband. You can imagine what a shock it was to hear such a cruel lie. And then that, too, strengthened my conviction. These people told nothing but lies. Not a word they said was true! They couldn't kill such a highly-trained soldier, they would need him in the future. They must have taken him to the Soviet Union, and one day, some time, they would let him come back. And then there were mistakes (lies?) of theirs which further confirmed the whole thing. For instance, Miklós Gimes's mother was a doctor, and the Gyorskocsi utca doctor told her in what order they had been executed. I don't remember exactly what he said, but it was something like, let's say, that Szilágyi had been the third to be executed. When the first amnestied prisoners came out in 1960 and told us that Szilágyi hadn't even been at the trial, that he had been killed right at the beginning—well, there you are, I said, another lie!

How long did you go on deluding yourself?

It wasn't really self-delusion. There were many circumstances that supported my belief. But when even the more important people who had been given life sentences started to trickle out of prison in 1963 (after the second amnesty), the straw I had clutching started to look more and more fragile.

Because everyone was saying the same thing?

None of the people who had been released came to see me. I was quite upset that nobody came who might have been the last one to see him. I didn't know anything, I got all my information from Aliz. That was the first time in my life I regretted not knowing any important reform communists. Either those who were free or those who had been sentenced.

How did you find out for certain?

The years passed, and in 1987 I went to the authorities for the first time, and said if it was true that he had been executed then I wanted the relevant extract from the records, the death certificate. They refused. After many refusals I finally got to the main office of the prison administration department. There the director refused to see me. I then asked the official on duty at the door to go up to his superior again and inform him that in that case I requested a prison visit, because if I couldn't get a death certificate then my husband must be alive and I wanted to speak to him. So then he agreed to see me. He said that the sentence had been

carried out, and that I should go to the 10th District Council where I would be given the relevant documents. I went. I won't go into details. They wrote the word "widow" on my identity papers. They promised to send me the piece of paper I had asked for. To this day I have not received it.

What do you know about Dr Ferenc Vida, the presiding judge at the Imre Nagy trial?

He's still alive. I only found out recently, when someone who had been a defendant in the trial met him by chance on the No. 59 tram. How wonderful it would have been to tell him, just once, that he is a monster. No one who agreed to take part in that trial could be human.

Do you feel hatred?

You can't live with hatred for thirty years. But if I start thinking about the past, I feel such infinite pain.—And bitterness because people like Dr. Vida or János Kádár are still alive.* But I wish them long lives. Every person who was responsible for those things should live for a long time and feel the burden of what they have done every day of their lives. At the very least. Kádár betrayed his prime minister, betrayed the government of which he was a member, and betrayed the Communists to whom he had promised that there would be a small, but honourable party after 1956. Instead he created a puppet government under foreign military protection, and directed an appalling bloodbath after the revolution had been crushed. And he even endorsed the Imre Nagy trial. He did not say no; he chose power instead. Even if there is no hatred in me, because there can be no such thing as an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth I will never be able to forgive that man for what he did.

ÉVA ÓNODY

* János Kádár died on the 6th of July, 1989, the very day Imre Nagy and his associates were declared not guilty at a re-trial by the Supreme Court of Justice.

Éva Ónody is on the staff of the magazine Új Tükör.



PÉTER NÁDAS

A tale about fire and knowledge

(A story)

One hot summer night Hungary was set on fire at all four corners by unknown persons for no apparent reason under unknown circumstances. All we know is that the fire started at Ágfalva in the west, at Tiszabecs in the east, at Nógrádszakáll in the north, and at Kübekháza in the south. The stubble and the fields made dry by the drought were burning, and shortly after midnight the fire reached the first houses of the villages. Even the most gentle and innocent of breezes blowing across the borders at Ágfalva from the west, at Tiszabecs from the east, at Nógrádszakáll from the north, and at Kübekháza from the south was driving the flames towards the interior of the country. Unaware of all this, Budapest was asleep.

Although it was announced as the seventh item in the morning news that comprehensive fire-drills were being held in the western, eastern, northern and southern counties, from this insignificant news item every Hungarian knew that the event was significant.

Although everybody knew that the news item meant something different from what it meant, everybody pretended not to know what it meant. For example, in the Hungarian language of the times, significant meant insignificant and insignificant meant significant, though these words had not completely lost their original meanings either, and therefore there could be no public agreement as to how to define them. There was merely a tacit agreement to define what non-existent public agreement could not mean.

If the words, through some happy coincidence, might have lost their original meanings, they would have acquired new ones, which however was inconceivable without first making individual knowledge public, without a new public agreement. For this reason then, almost every word of their language meant something different from what it meant according to their individual knowledge or their common non-knowledge, and they had to try to work out the meanings of words sometimes on the basis of the speaker's position, and sometimes on the basis of the new sense relative to the original. And if a word had apparently lost its meaning, since it could not be understood either on the basis of its sense or the speaker's position, then this impossibility acquired a more profound meaning than if the word had actually meant something. Words with incomprehensible meanings in the language of the Hungarians referred to the deep human community, of which, otherwise, they were not allowed to think. In thinking about nothing, people thinking in other languages can inevitably think of something, whereas people thinking in Hungarian must overcome the apparently insuperable historical task of not thinking of anything when they think

about nothing and of not thinking of something that might lead their thinking somewhere when they think about something.

Though this strange way of using language did not make their communication easier, the basic principle of their communication was not to make their individual knowledge public—and in this they had a great deal of practice. During the last century and a half of their history they had come to realize that it is only shared ignorance that can protect them from individual follies of any kind; so, if they do not share their individual knowledge, they cannot commit follies jointly either, follies which would breed in them hatred against each other or against others. This was the way they reasoned. And the logic of their reasoning, no matter how complicated it may appear to be, had not proved to be faulty in handling their individual or common fate, for they remained Hungarians by virtue of their sharing this logic which excludes the sharing of knowledge, and, therefore, from the point of view of their survival not only had their logic not been useless but, on the contrary, it had become the only and exclusive precondition for it. However, what is a useful implement in a gale should not necessarily be useful in a fire as well.

If a ship is into a storm, the sails are usually taken in; however, the wind may create such conditions in which the proper thing to do is to let out all the sails. If, on the other hand, fire breaks out on board, in battling with the all-consuming flames it makes little difference whether the sails are taken in or let out.

Thus the logic of their behaviour, thinking, and use of language possessed a feature which can be deemed neither mistaken nor faulty and which it is perhaps more accurate to perceive as a failing that is inherent to each ambiguous thing. Insofar as the basic principle of their communication with each other had become the idea of not making their individual knowledge public—since it was this obsessive insistence on a tacit agreement through which they have been able to preserve their national unity—it had to follow, as regards the individual, that each Hungarian assumes that every other Hungarian knows what he does and knows it equally well, though they are not in a position to determine what they do and do not know. However, since they can rely only on constant, mutual assumptions, assumptions that enable them to search for the meanings of words by ignoring their meanings, all they can jointly know is that they all have to rely on assuming things of which either they do not know individually or cannot know individually what it is they do not know jointly.

In this rather delicate situation the inhabitants of the country nevertheless remained unified in that no one tried to put out the fire. By their lack of action, which obviously concerned the fire, they preserved their unity in such a way that they were all thinking about the meaning of fire—and who would not consider thinking a form of action? Of course, there was disagreement as regards the meaning of fire, but there was no need to exchange opinions about it, if for no other reason than that everyone justifiably assumed that the others knew just as well as he did that it does not mean what it means. And if fire does not mean fire, then either it is superfluous to worry about it, or it can only be a fire which is not burning, or the really burning question is whether fire means water. Those who approached the issue from the aspect of the sense of the word had inevitably to think of water, and those who approached it from the aspect of the speaker's position were unable to reach such a conclusion. While the former thought in reality a major flood was threatening the country, the latter thought instead of trying to raise fake fires. For if there can be fires which do not burn things, then likewise we can have fake fires which do burn things, and this is no less dangerous than the fire which really means flood.

By the afternoon this collective non-knowledge of the individual knowledge of serious danger had produced an atmosphere of tension, which in other languages even today is referred to as the tension of responsibility felt for the fate of one's nation. But not for the Hungarians of that time. For no matter what they thought individually, there was no one who could not smell the pungent smell of smoke. But in case they talked about it at all, they were jointly of the opinion that a big storm was about to break out because the skies were black, although they knew individually that neither a flood nor a fake fire emits smoke, and that for the same reason neither can give rise to a storm. But then there was more about the events on the evening news.

In order to gain a more precise understanding of the events, we should also say more about those respectable women and honorable men for whom the public announcement of the news which serves the common good had not simply been a profession but also a style of life, making demands on their bodies and souls alike. For in those years Hungarians had become uniform in their thinking, behaviour and consequently their physical appearance to such a degree that it was almost impossible for them to distinguish themselves from others. For example, one characteristic they possessed was that they were born as adults, and since there was nothing to grow up to, they remained children. There was no need for schools anymore. As an adult, anyone could lecture anyone about anything, for there was no one who did not remain a child, but on the other hand as a child anyone could learn from anything, for there was no one who could have become an adult. And if it happened that there was no one around to lecture, then one could lecture himself, for it had become a common and inalienable trait of all Hungarians that as children they were no longer aware of what they knew as adults. In this domain of equality, however, there were self-sacrificing individuals who, in the interest of perfect and complete equality, had to remain more equal than others.

We should brand as malicious and misleading all those irresponsible assumptions that it was the women and men governing the country who could be identified as these more equal individuals. At the present state of scientific research, we do not have any evidence to show that the women and men governing the country had ever shared their individual knowledge with anyone. This they did not do either among themselves or with others and, as a consequence, there was merely a formal distinction between those Hungarians who were well-acquainted with public affairs and those who were not. While the Hungarians who were not familiar with the public affairs of the country obstinately insisted—precisely because of this unfamiliarity—upon the tacit agreement undertaken in their own individual interest that they could not make their own individual knowledge public under any circumstances, those familiar with the public affairs of the country obstinately insisted—precisely because of their familiarity with public affairs—upon the tacit agreement undertaken in the public interest that it was only the common non-knowledge of things that could ensure the individual knowledge of which one could be aware. While the former pretended not to have individual knowledge of things—merely common non-knowledge of them—the latter pretended that their common non-knowledge was their individual knowledge. And this was reasonable indeed. For how could those unfamiliar through no fault of their own with public affairs make their individual knowledge a part of public thinking, and how could those familiar through no fault of their own with public affairs not make common non-knowledge the essence of individual thinking. Hence, in this respect we can certainly regard the situation as one in which those who governed and those who were governed were essentially equal. Those who governed could not restrict those

who were governed in their freedom of individual knowledge, but neither could those who were governed restrict those who governed in their freedom of common non-knowledge. In the Hungary of those times, anyone could do what he did not know, and everyone could publicly think of this what they did not think. And if the Hungarians had not plunged their country into the chaos of final destruction with their noble and appealing ignorance, this was only because there were among them individuals more equal than themselves. These individuals were none other than the news announcers.

Hungarian announcers were the spitting image of other Hungarians and yet when they began to speak they differed from them in every way. They resembled every other Hungarian in that they were also the happy combination of child and adult, but whereas the ordinary Hungarian could at best lecture some Hungarians about the state of the world, the announcers were in a position to lecture each and every Hungarian except themselves about this. Their self-instruction could not have been effective in any case because they differed from the rest of the Hungarians in that, while the other Hungarians could interpret the news to their own liking, the announcers had to pretend against their liking that they did not understand a word of what they said to the others. They were spirited in teaching, dispirited in learning. For if they were individuals who could not understand a word of what they said—since they were not individuals—then they could be the best, indeed the shining examples of the common non-knowledge which was shared by all Hungarians. And if one can represent something which is shared by all, doesn't this provide more than enough grounds for being spirited individually as well?

As regards teaching no one could be more adult than they were, since they lectured everyone, but no one could be more childish than they were either, since they could not learn even from their own words. For had they pretended to understand what they said, everyone would have thought they were fools, since they presumed to understand something that was in reality unintelligible. So they could not do this. But then this is a good enough reason for anyone to be dispirited.

But their unique popularity could not be called into question for still other reasons. In those times, Hungarians made use of a mere three words in their speech, words which derived from the domain of basic life functions but which had lost their original meaning. One word denoted action, the second the object of action, and the third word was used as a substitute for all possible adjectives and adverbs. Not only would we commit an act of indecency but we would also overburden the present scholarly paper if we said more about these words here. However, there is a circumstance that we cannot leave unmentioned. It is that the announcers as individuals also used the same three words for the purposes of everyday speech, though as soon as they appeared in public they began to use a language no one spoke. And this was regarded as a multiply ambiguous circumstance by all Hungarians. Above all, it meant that there existed a common language which did not exist and, on the other hand, it reminded them that something like this not only had been in existence but, in addition, can be brought into existence if public agreement can be arrived at through some lucky coincidence.

On that hot summer night, when the larger part of the country was already in flames, an especially popular female announcer was reading the news, a woman whose voice had a sweetly maternal quality. It is no exaggeration to say that she was the most equal even among the more equals among equals. Throughout the past century and a half in the history of the Hungarians there was no buoyantly joyful or

mournfully stormy event of which it was not her who informed them, and thus the grateful inhabitants of the country could not help but enthrone her in their hearts. Her exceptional popularity was due to an exceptional personality trait of hers for which others longed ardently but in vain, and which they could only imitate at most. For her personality was split not into two, as was the case with all the rest or ordinary Hungarians, but into three by schizophrenia, and she was not only capable of reading a text of which she apparently did not understand a word with the deepest conviction and utmost empathy, but through her emphases she in part indicated to the others how they should interpret the unintelligible words from the viewpoint of common non-knowledge, and she in part indicated from the viewpoint of their individual knowledge what it is that they should not understand those things to mean, things that do not really make sense anyway. This woman was an oracle and a fount of knowledge.

I have to begin with a dramatic announcement, she said in her cloudless voice, addressing those who could still hear her, and as her face lit up with the irresistible charm of her ripe womanhood, her words stuck in her throat as though she said one of those ordinary words she was wont to use. She knew very well that her countrymen understood unspoken words even better because they understand not only what a word does not mean but also what it means relative to a situation. And then, from the viewpoint of individual knowledge, in anticipation of the words referring to common non-knowledge-words that were about to leave her fine lips glittering with irony, her eyes began to blaze. Though there are all sorts of rumours, she said, according to which the country is burning, it can be stated with certainty, on the basis of information from the most reliable sources, that everything is quiet and life is going on as normal nationwide. No one had allowed themselves to be misled. People are frying their fish for dinner at the small street-stands, the little bear in the evening TV cartoon for children is brushing his teeth as usual, and the machine-heart of the discos will also start beating soon. She made these announcements in a voice filled with gentleness and with eyes dimmed by real tears. Those who do not believe it, she said, bridle up her head with death-defying courage, can take a look around. She did not risk too much. In the Hungarian language of the times, a request meant a statement, of course, and so not even those Hungarians who were still in a position to look around actually did look around. The beautiful woman did not say anything about the alleged fire-drills in the remainder of the announcement, and neither did she explain the spreading of the rumours with the usual hysteria-provoking propaganda campaign of the enemy news media, but as the possible source of the news she referred, accompanying what she said with a belittling smile for all credulous minds, to a circumstance that in the past few days during the normal annual inventory certain maps had indeed been set on fire at their four corners in the National Cartographical Institute.

At this point, however, she made an irredeemable mistake. The sheet of paper in front of her read that the long invalid maps of the country had been set on fire, but instead she said that the long invalid country's maps had been set on fire. And this really almost meant what it did.

Forks stopped in midair and so did the knives in the hands of the Hungarians who were still alive. In their gaping mouths the parsleyed boiled potatoes, the pickled cucumber, and the roasted parson's nose remained unchewed. Every single person gaped into space, every single person was silent. And this had created a silence that, regardless of how anyone had looked at the situation previously, no one could help

not noticing. No word is more powerful than collective silence. Every Hungarian had to notice it at the same time, and through this happy coincidence their knowledge about silence also became common. The windows were open.

Everyone could hear his own silence, which did not differ in any way from that of the person next door. Silence does not disturb silence. And since everyone had more than one neighbour, it was only inevitable that the neighbours felt within themselves the same silence that they felt in others. The silence of one Hungarian became the silence of another. The silence became so widespread that there was no saying which silence belonged to whom, though everyone, invariably, belonged to himself.

Deep down in their common silence they could all hear the sound of the blaze. Only sound disturbs silence. But no one spoke. For from that time on, luckily for all of us, what anyone knew was in no way different from what the others could also think.

As long as there is water in the wells.

Translated by Zoltán Kövecses

Péter Nádas's most recently translated novel, *Book of Memoirs*, will be published by Pantheon Books, New York.



JOHN LUKACS

Hungary in 1938

The year 1938 was one of the six or seven important turning-points in the history of Hungary during the twentieth century. It was a turning-point (and not merely a milestone) in the entire twenty-five-year history of the Horthy era; and the first decisive turning-point in the history of the Hungarian state after its diminution and mutilation, in 1919–20. In 1938 for the first time the restrictive constraints imposed on Hungary by the Treaty of Trianon were broken. These developments were, of course, not independent of that greater development, the breaking up of the order that had been imposed upon Germany and Europe by the victorious Western Allies at Versailles: a drastic change accomplished by Hitler in what, in retrospect, was the most successful year of his career: his incorporation of Austria into the Third Reich, his reduction of Czechoslovakia, together with the then immense accretion of the power and prestige of a new Germany. The domestic developments of its neighbour states, including Hungary were, of course, largely consequent to these greater events. Yet it is insufficient to contemplate Hungary in 1938 as if its history had been entirely determined by outside forces; and an undue concentration, by the historian, on Hungarian foreign policy itself may obscure the then existence of more profound, or significant, developments.

Materially speaking 1938 was the first relatively prosperous year for Hungary after a long period. One of the reasons for this was a general one: the depression years of the Thirties were now, largely speaking, over—especially for a country whose production and economy were predominantly agricultural. The other element was the profitable economic relationship between Hungary and the Third Reich. The latter had replaced all others as not only the principal but the predominant purchaser of Hungarian agricultural products, and the predominant supplier of industrial goods for Hungary, of a quality and a price that were affordable since, contrary to all economic laws, Germany succeeded in maintaining the value of a currency that was solid, convertible, and hardly inflated at the time. Tourism to Hungary, too, reached its peak in that year. One of its prime events was the Eucharistic Congress held in Budapest in May 1938: a brilliant assembly, the economic impact of which was less significant than its symbolization of Hungary's risen prestige. This, again, was not independent of the general political development of Europe at that time. The successes of Hitler and of Mussolini, of the Berlin—Rome Axis, the portents of Franco's impending triumph in the Spanish Civil War, together with many other ancillary events represented the coming of an era marked by the political and ideological domination of an anti-Communist (and also anti-Liberal) Right across Central and Eastern and Southern Europe; and Hungary, ever since 1919–20, was an early representative of that kind of Right. What, then, is important to consider is that the first serious symptoms of a split within that Right would occur in Hungary in 1938, foreshadowing a general historical development—and not only in Hungary—where some of the most important adversaries of Hitler and of National Socialism would

be the men and the institutions of the traditional Right. We shall have to say something about this later in this paper.

In 1938 the principal event for Hungary—indeed, for Europe and the world—was the German conquest or, more precisely, the incorporation of Austria into the German Reich, in March 1938. That great Power, the greatest in Europe at that time, with a population of nearly eighty million, incarnating a dynamic and aggressive ideology, with many admirers beyond its state frontiers, now suddenly became Hungary's neighbour, at a border two hundred kilometers from Budapest. The reaction of Hungarians to the event of the *Anschluss* already indicated the great division that would divide them during the next seven years and the Second World War. There were Hungarians who welcomed that event; there were others who thought that Hungary may profit from its consequences; while there were others who regarded it as ominous as well as dangerous for the liberty and the independence of their nation. The government, and most of the press, had not felt free to voice whatever concerns or uneasiness they may have had; indeed, the very personnel of the then government was divided, as was the nation at large. It was therefore that the Regent, Admiral Horthy, chose the then unusual practice of addressing the nation in a radio speech in early April, a speech without specifics, whose tenor and purpose was to promote a sense of national unity and calm.

The main events of Hungarian foreign policy and, more specifically, of Hungarian-German relations, during the rest of the year 1938 are well-known, and have been expounded since in various monographs by scholars in Hungary and abroad. It is therefore unnecessary to attempt more than their brief summation. Immediately after his triumphant conquest of Vienna, Hitler began to threaten Czechoslovakia, ostensibly with the purpose of detaching those portions of it that were inhabited by a Sudeten German population. Since Hungary, too, was a revisionist power, aggrieved by its former loss of Slovakia and by the consequent Czecho-Slovak rule over nearly one million Hungarians, the eventual presentation of Hungarian demands for the rectification of the Trianon frontiers was expectable and logical in 1938, associating—if not entirely aligning—Hungarian foreign policy with that of the Third Reich. Shortly before the dangerous phase of what later became known as the Munich crisis, that is, at the end of August 1938, Horthy visited Hitler in Germany. (The previous year he had visited Poland, and the King and Queen of Italy had come to Budapest.) Their meeting was, by and large, satisfactory, even though Hitler and his government expressed, among themselves, some dissatisfaction with the attitude of the Hungarians. The Munich Agreement among the four great European Powers included a directive for the eventual solution of the Hungarian-Czechoslovak minority problem. Immediately after Munich Budapest put pressure on Prague; Hungarian military preparations were demonstrably mounted. A token cession of a small town across the Hungarian-Slovak border (Ipolyvás—Sahy) led to further negotiations which then proved inconclusive; thereafter the Hungarian and the Czech governments consented to submit the question of their frontier rectification to the governments of Germany and Italy. (The British and the French governments were now obviously unwilling to involve themselves.) The result was the so-called First Vienna Award, signed on 2 November 1938, the first drastic revision of the Treaty of Trianon, whereby the southern strip of Slovakia and of the Carpatho-Ukraine (Ruthenia) were given to Hungary, including approximately 700,000 inhabitants.

These amputations ordained in Munich and Vienna (together with another, minor one: the transfer of the town of Tesin to Poland) led not to a pacification but

to the fatal weakening of the Czechoslovak state. Especially in its eastern, Carpatho-Ukrainian portion, confused and even chaotic political conditions were beginning to prevail. Unsatisfied with the entirety of the territorial gains acquired in Vienna, the Hungarian government and the military attempted to inject paramilitary freebooting bands across the frontier there; indeed, the government seriously contemplated the Hungarian military invasion of that territory, which would then lead, among other things, to a common frontier with Poland at the crest of the Carpathians (reaching thereby the first portion of the former historic frontier of the Hungarian kingdom.) These plans were to mature around 20 November: but warnings and pressure from Berlin dissuaded the regime of Budapest from going ahead. Frontier incidents along that border nevertheless continued to occur, including a fairly serious one in early January 1939. The final dissolution of the Czecho-Slovak state in March 1939, which included the German conquest of Bohemia and Moravia and their incorporation into the Reich, made it then possible for Hungary to annex the Carpatho-Ukraine and reach that common frontier with Poland. Soon thereafter—principally because of the revolution in British policy, leading to London's guarantee to Poland—a new chapter would open in the history of Europe and of the world.

This summary of Hungarian foreign policy in 1938 could suggest a complete subordination of Hungary to the wishes of the Third Reich—or, in other words, a Hungarian willingness to align Hungarian policies completely with those of Germany. In reality, this was not quite the case. As a matter of fact, it was especially in foreign policy that attempts were made to limit such an alignment, not only for the sake of asserting the continued independence of Hungary but to suggest the significance of that independence to London and Paris (and also to Rome and Warsaw.) At the summit of the state, the sentiments and inclinations of the Regent, while anti-Czech, anti-Communist, and respectful of the military and cultural qualities of the German world, were also old-fashioned enough to be wary of Nazism (especially of its Hungarian variants); they also included a considerable element of Anglophilia. In a more conscious and thoughtful way this was also true of some of the highest officials of the government, of most of the Hungarian aristocracy, of most of the personnel of the foreign ministry, and of the Foreign Minister in 1938, Kálmán Kánya, who had been trained in the era of the Dual Monarchy and whose conservatism was sometimes distrusted by the government of the Third Reich. As a result of these inclinations, minor steps were taken in 1938 in Hungarian foreign policy that were meant not only to emphasize the independence of Hungary but to suggest to the Western Powers the limits of her association with Hitler's Reich. Thus, for example, Hungarian negotiations with Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia (at the time allies of France, even though only on paper) were conducted and concluded in August, at Bled, at the same time when Horthy was about to visit Hitler. In that Bled agreement the military restrictions imposed on Hungary by the Trianon Treaty of 1920 were lifted. Before, during and after the Munich crisis, Hungarian foreign policy sought a close alignment with, and support from Italy and Poland, rather than Germany, with the hope of an eventual establishment of an Italian-Hungarian-Polish (and perhaps also Yugoslav) *bloc* of Central-Eastern European states that would indirectly limit German expansionism further eastward. In this Hungarian foreign policy at the time had put, in retrospect, due hopes on the differences between Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany, between Mussolini and Hitler. At the same time it remains true that Hungary could count on no effective assistance from other European powers, including France and Britain at the time. At the end of the year

Kánya was replaced by a less intelligent Foreign Minister, Count István Csáky who, among other things, in early February 1939 announced the break of Hungarian diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union (they had been established in 1934.) In doing this he wished to impress favorably the anti-Communist powers such as Germany or Italy—obviously unaware of the condition that Hitler's statesmanship was unscrupulous enough to negotiate soon thereafter a pact with Stalin that would lead to a division of Poland and much of Eastern Europe in August 1939.

It is at this point that the historian cannot—or, more precisely, should not—separate the history of Hungary's foreign relations from the history of internal events. Even before 1938 we have entered a phase of history where the relations of states (and of governments) must include the relations of entire nations and of their peoples: where, in other words, diplomatic and political, social and cultural events and developments very much overlap and sometimes decisively influence each other. What happened with, and in, Hungary in 1938 was not merely the result or the reflection of external events. There was a profound division within the nation, on many levels. The principal element of this division was between those who welcomed (or, at least, who were not worried by) the rising power of Germany, and those who saw great dangers therein. The latter were also opposed to National Socialism, whereas the inclinations of the former varied from enthusiasm to an acceptance of at least some of its tenets. Much—though not all—of this division involved, too, attitudes concerning what, at the time, was called “the Jewish question”.

The complexities involving the presence of Jews within Hungary were very great. Again, this is not a sufficient place to detail them, save perhaps for a briefest summary. The Jewish population in Hungary was considerable, above 5 per cent (in Budapest about 20 per cent). Yet the assimilation of Hungarian Jews was considerable, too: more complete than in any other Eastern European nation with a relatively large Jewish population, and at least as, if not more, complete than the assimilation of Jews in Austria where relatively few Jews lived in the provinces. Ever since 1919–20 the Horthy regime promulgated restrictive anti-Jewish laws and practices mostly as a consequence of the disastrous Béla Kun Communist experiment in 1919, when thirty-two of the forty-five commissars had been Jewish; yet during the 1920s much of that anti-Semitism had abated, while after the rise of Hitler it began to grow again. By 1938 everybody knew (or at least sensed) that the treatment of Jews was a (if not *the*), litmus paper in the eyes of Hitler: it would determine the reliability of a government he had to deal with. Most governments knew this—even without German pressure put on them. It this respect it is significant that in 1938 the first government declaration to treat the “Jewish question” was made by the then Prime Minister Kálmán Darányi in Győr in early March 1938—that is, *before* the “Anschluss” of Austria to Germany. Soon thereafter the government proposed a law limiting the occupations and the liberties of Hungarian Jews. It was a—relatively—moderate law, limiting the presence and the participation of Jews in several occupations, institutions and industries to 20 per cent, and defining their category quite unlike the categories of the Nuremberg Laws. After lengthy and important debates, Parliament passed the law in May 1938. (One year later a stricter and more injurious law was proposed by the then government and passed, mostly due to increasing internal and external pressures in that regard.)

By that time (May 1938) the inefficient and mediocre Darányi left the Premiership. The Regent appointed Béla Imrédy as his successor. Imrédy was a well-educated and very intelligent man, whose life would eventually debouch into tragedy (leading to

his execution in 1946.) In a very significant way the story of Imrédy's career—and of his mind—are a kind of microcosmic reflection of the year 1938: his agonizing reappraisal of the course of his life, the motive sources of which reappraisal are still largely unknown. Imrédy was a conservative financial expert of stature, with definite signs of an Anglophile inclination. Sometime in late August or early September he changed his mind: he concluded that Hungary could hope nothing from England and that it must consequently adopt a policy of a loyal ally of Germany, not only in its foreign policy but involving its domestic institutions. His enemies, his critics, and many historians since that time attributed this change of heart to his political ambitiousness which was no doubt considerable: but there may have been other elements at play, very much including a confidential interview Imrédy had given to an English journalist in August about his unwillingness to subordinate Hungary to Germany, an interview which was then irresponsibly made known to Berlin. In any event, by November 1938 Imrédy announced the formation of a political movement of the radical Right (even though he was still a member of the large and inchoate National Unity, that is, the governmental, party). He was now attacked in Parliament by the more conservative elements of that party and also by those who were appalled by his new political direction (which also included more radical propositions of anti-Semitism). By that time Imrédy was not above seeking support from the growing Hungarian National Socialist (Arrow-Cross) movement. But in February 1939 he had to resign. His enemies informed the Regent, and made public their investigations, according to which this newcomer to anti-Semitism had had certain Jewish ancestors. His successor was Count Pál Teleki, whose character, subsequent career and eventual tragic suicide (in 1941) no longer belongs within the scope of this paper.

It will, then, appear that opponents of the appeasement of Hitler's Germany, and of National Socialism, in 1938 were to be found on the Right as well as on the Left in Hungary—as was the case, too, in many other countries, including England, where the principal opponent of the policy of appeasement was Churchill. Many of these people were old-fashioned patriots and conservatives, whom their radical National Socialist opponents called "reactionaries". In many cases it was indeed their "reactionary" convictions of decency and honour dictating their politics. These were national and patriotic considerations; but they were also unwilling to forfeit Hungary's reputation in the Western world, beyond the Rhine. In March 1939 they would be heartened by the then decision of the British government to take a stand against further German expansion; but already before that time these conservative and generally Anglophile elements in Hungary began to coalesce. An important event in their activity was the creation of a new daily newspaper, *Magyar Nemzet*, in 1938, edited by the highly intelligent public figure and historian Sándor Pethő (whose former conservative paper, *Magyarország*, had been bought and transformed into a daily of National Socialist propaganda with the help of German money earlier that year). In their opposition to National Socialism they had allies; the remnant Liberals and Social Democrats of Hungary, the members and the leadership of the Smallholders Party, a large portion of the aristocracy, many of the leaders of the Christian churches, a considerable part of Hungarian artists and intellectuals (who had also protested publicly against the anti-Jewish laws), and some men in high governmental positions (though the government and the cabinet itself was divided between Germanophiles and their opponents).

There were, on the other hand, large numbers of people who in 1938 gravitated to the pro-German side. In addition to the increasingly Hitlerite German minority

(also about 5 per cent of the population) Germanophile inclinations were especially strong among the military and, here and there, among the non-Jewish elements of the lower middle-class) as also in many other places of the world, that class of people were inclined to be Germanophile, while the upper-middle classes were generally Anglophile—and this reflected not merely political but cultural inclinations). But by 1938 the masses, too—especially the industrial working-class were not immune to the propaganda of National Socialism, not so much because of what was happening in Germany but mainly because of the populism and the anti-capitalism, together with anti-Semitism, that the Hungarian National Socialist parties, and their Arrow-Cross movement, represented. That movement grew rapidly, and perhaps even alarmingly, throughout 1938. Its success was, then, evident in May 1939 (the first universally secret national ballot in Hungary) when the Arrow-Cross emerged as the second largest party in the nation, gathering nearly 25 per cent of the votes in Budapest, many of them in the industrial districts of the capital—while the former defenders and champions of that working-class, the Hungarian Social Democrats, had dwindled to the level of a small party.

Because history is never of one piece, we may find a dual impression of Hungary in 1938. On the one hand the appearances of national unity were strong, in some ways stronger than before: for the entire nation, without exception, rejoiced in that first recovery of lands that had been so unjustly taken from Hungary nearly twenty years before. Also, as I wrote at the outset of this paper, a general aura of relative economic prosperity (and, I add, a good harvest) marked that summery year. On the other hand I am compelled to say that the above-mentioned and deepening divisions in 1938 marked what I—perhaps alone among historians—may even call a kind of Hungarian civil war, the main camps of which would live on until 1945. By a civil war I mean, of course, something different from an armed struggle (though in 1944–45 it would even come to that, on occasion). It was a civil war of minds, between those who thought that Hungary's destiny was, or should be, bound together with that of the new Germany; and those who thought that the very opposite was true. The sufferings of Hungary and its subsequent tragedy during the Second World War were not always caused by that civil war of Hungarian preferences and minds; but they were surely exacerbated by it. The phenomena of that civil war would appear not only in public statements or in Parliament; they were apparent in every one of the controversies among journalists, publicists, writers, historians, artists, actors and actresses. It was not Marxism or Liberalism or Democracy or even Fascism that seemed to be the wave of the future in 1938: it was National Socialism. Our respect is therefore due to those who in 1938, in that most triumphant of years for Hitler and for what he seemed to represent were willing to resist it . . . two or more years before another European reactionary patriot, General De Gaulle, would employ the word "resistance" in a new, honourable sense.

John Lukacs's most recent book, *Budapest 1900*, was published by Weidenfeld and Nicholson (New York).

The compromise of disillusion

István Bibó on the aftermath of 1956

István Bibó, a major Hungarian political thinker, was born in 1911. After getting his doctorate in political science, he continued his studies in Vienna and Geneva. Following his return home, he was appointed to the Ministry of Justice and became part of the radical, anti-German wing of the populist movement. In 1945, he joined the National Peasants' Party and was appointed head of the Public Administration Division of the Ministry of the Interior. He worked with tremendous energy on the reform of public administration and on the draft of the republican constitution as well as publishing a series of highly important essays ("The Crisis of Hungarian Democracy", 1945, "The equilibrium within the Coalition and Local Government Elections", 1946, "The Peace Treaty and Hungarian Democracy", 1946, "The Misery of the Small States in Eastern Europe", 1946, "Coalition at the Crossroads", 1947, "The Jewish Question in Hungary", 1948, "Distorted Hungarian Character, Deadlocked Hungarian History", 1948). On the eve of the frame-ups, Bibó, a man of "obstinate innocence" and "the most tolerant Hungarian" (Zoltán Szabó's terms) fell silent. He lost his post in the Ministry, and later at the University as well. Between 1951 and 1956, he was on the staff of the University Library. The National Peasants' Party was re-established on November 3rd 1956 and, recalling Bibó from his total withdrawal into private life, had him appointed Senior Minister without Portfolio in Imre Nagy's government. The following day the Soviet troops entered Budapest and the new minister, of one-day's standing, worked on the draft of his famous Declaration in the Parliament building, under the astonished eyes of Soviet soldiers. On November 6th, already at home, he wrote a "Draft for a Compromise Solution of the Hungarian Question", and an analysis that amounted to an indictment: "The Position of Hungary and the World Situation". In May 1957 he was arrested, and in the autumn of 1958 sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released following a general amnesty in 1963, but the treatment he had received in prison had seriously impaired his health. Until his retirement in 1971 he was a librarian, and sometimes storeman in the Statistical Library, and, with the exception of a short article, he could publish nothing in Hungary until his death in 1979.

A selection of his writings appeared in London in 1960, and in Paris in 1969. Between 1981 and 1984 the European Protestant Free University published a collected edition in four volumes in Basle. Readers in Hungary had to wait until 1986 when Magvető Publishers brought out a three-volume selection of his works. In 1976, Harvester Press published an abbreviated version of his book, in English, under the title *The Paralysis of International Institutions and the Remedies*. In 1981, seventy prominent Hungarian intellectuals issued a Festschrift in his honour. This samizdat publication was an unparalleled demonstration for István Bibó, by then a symbol of democratic opposition.

The following is taken from the final one of a series of interviews by Tibor Huszár taped between 1976 and 1979*. There Bibó, at his own request, summed up his thoughts in a soliloquy, and the text can undoubtedly be regarded as an intellectual testament.

What then are the fundamentals of this whole situation in sum? After my release, I acquired a peaceful intellectual occupation, not in a leading position; this qualified me for a modest pension, which I am in the position to supplement occasionally, though not regularly, by modest casual work. My wife is in the same position. My children pursue honest occupations; they are able to look after themselves, they have founded families and have children. I have no desire to play any public role, to campaign, to be in the limelight, the reserve, the source from which civil courage sometimes unexpectedly springs has already thoroughly dried up in

* Tibor Huszár: *Bibó István. Beszélgetések, politikai, életrajzi dokumentumok* (Conversations, Political and Biographical Documents). Magyar Krónika, 370 pp.

me. I do not feel like nor do I have the energy to provoke the established powers, unless I feel forced to do so by being completely stalemated where my chances of publication are concerned. This is no minor problem, as I myself have been surprised to see the amount of reflection that has accumulated in me to be put to paper two and a half years before my 70th birthday. Apart from my original occupation with political and legal theory, these reflections concern Hungarian history, European history, cultural history, and even a few minor literary themes, both in the form of new thinking and manuscripts more than thirty years old. Political science and sociology topics are in the minority, if not in weight, in quantity at any rate.

To bring all this to light has essentially remained the sole worthwhile goal for the remainder of my life. The question is what chance there is for this amid all the snags blocking the way for somebody in my position in attempting to publish. Even if I turn to utterly harmless subjects, free of politics and ideology, concerning literature or the past, I am still exposed to the wary, safety-first or uncivil attitude of the state-run publishers or journal editors; this can ultimately bring my requests for publication to a deadlock through a series of suggested changes (to which I have never turned a deaf ear provided I felt even the slightest justification for them) or by temporisation or again by shelving the work for good. This has been borne out by the delays concerning my article on László Németh. Should the subject include some sociology or political theory, the position is further aggravated by the hardly refutable pretext of asking how such subjects can be discussed in the complete omission of Marxist ideology or at least phraseology. The difficulty can be even further intensified if the theme touches ever so distantly on politics or ideology, even if there is no intention of sketching out some positive standpoint. And if it is a question of an expressly ideological or political position, even if on a level which is purely concerned with theory and principles (practically all my substantial messages being of this kind), then the full impossibility of execution sets in. It is true that there have been some semi-official pronouncement according to which the present system is open to arguments with correct disputing parties, but what makes a party in debate correct? There are certainly no obstacles for someone in professing his faith for his religious persuasion or his belief in God, and he can even argue this, as after all, both sides are aware that such a debate would scarcely be followed by a mass "conversion" on either side. Nor do I think it impossible even to air expressly conservative, aristocratic, or indeed reactionary views within some debate, as these do not enjoy any serious mass support. But what should happen to the airing of ideological or political themes—and I venture to hope that mine would be of this kind—whose progressive, democratic and radical nature are beyond the shadow of a doubt, but at the same time they are suited to reveal contradictions in the official position which are strongly felt by the intellectual young, whose lack of proper interest in the official ideology has actually given rise to so much serious complaint? Such a debate clearly has no real future in the given system of ideological exclusiveness.

All this is no reason for me to judge the channels of publication in Hungary, or publication abroad through the relevant channels in Hungary, as fully impossible or an unworkable proposition. But when such a path proves to be helplessly rugged, or endless, or even blocked, I cannot fully rule out resorting to attempts to publish directly abroad, with all the possible risks this involves, if I do not wish to make completely futile the God knows how short or how long remainder of my life.

The most serious common feature of all these variants and the possible developments and hazards inherent in them lies in their complete uncertainty and incalculability. The possibility of simple domestic publication or an official dispatch abroad, as well as the possible consequences of an unofficial, private dispatch depend exclusively on the deliberations of the state authorities, principally those who are responsible for culture, fairly unrestricted by any rules, under which they may or may not consider the granting, or the sufferance, of this as expedient, conditionally on the prevalent political line, the passing political situation and the momentarily valid evaluation of the individual in question. The rules are so extensive and elastic in this respect, giving such free rein to the decision-makers, that they cannot be accused of violating any kind of rule, not even to the extent that accusation could be laid against those

goalers of mine who made everything that should have been the prisoners' due depend on various undefined "deserts". Nor can one even refer to the basic principles of the law, as could be done in the case of the pension regulation which inflicted new punishment on those formerly imprisoned for certain allegedly seditious acts, years or decades after they have served their sentences. Yet the basic approach is the same: a profound irritation against citizens, subjects, subordinates or those led, who make demands, referring to rights and laws, instead of supplicating for help, favour or mercy.

I cannot refrain from a comparison which, though not conceived in malice, will certainly give rise to indignation: namely that all the arguments that stress the sensible, temperate and attractive nature of the present political line as against the one that preceded it and the one possibly threatening in the future, remind me irresistibly of the expectations, disappointments and joys the subjects of old kingdoms lived in when they thought they had to accept bloody and tyrannic kings as calamities of nature, having no alternative but to wait and hope for the bloody tyrant to be succeeded by a good and gracious king. And if they were indeed blessed with one, all they could do was to gratefully rejoice and pray that this one should not be succeeded by nother bloody tyrant, and meanwhile expect remedy for wrongs and reprisal for injustices from the favour and grace of the good king. All this by accepting the fact that the gracious and good king naturally does not like peremptory subjects who refer to rights and principles.

Transposed to the present, this view leads to the reasoning which compares today's situation here at home with the years of the personality cult. (This expression always has a risible effect on me, as in a genuine sense of the term, a personality cult exists around Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of Britain, or, to a certain extent, there was one around General De Gaulle, but the specific of that which existed around Stalin or Rákosi, should be looked for among the various forms of tyranny, defined by various attributes.) So we should be pleased to be faced with such sane and temperate wielders of state authority who, thank Heaven, are not mad tyrants and megalomaniacs, who do not want to be dreaded by the whole country, and indeed, do not wish to encounter their own pictures by the hundreds, nor even wish to be greeted by rounds of rhythmical applause. Yet everyone knows that such things are possible and they are ready to jump in case they do come about. Another merit of this system is what is usually summed up as consolidation: on the one hand, in the form of positive achievements, growing legal and material security, an expanding range of consumer goods, a relative freedom to change one's place of work, a widely increased opportunity to travel abroad, even if dependent on the permission and discretion of the authorities; on the other hand, in way of non-committal, the easing up of the day-to-day harassment that overtaxed the life of people, an end to the universal fear of despotism, the repression of the periodical hysteria in the state machinery discovering non-existing plots, and in intellectual life, the end to an insistence on an ideological schema and the imposition of vulgar adulation. What makes this turn particularly remarkable is that this system came into being in a dramatic political situation, after 1956, when the re-establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat took place during a very savage period of reprisal, which was followed, practically without transition, by consolidation. Again I am unable to withhold another comparison which is not malicious and yet will still spark off indignation: I am reminded of the consolidation achieved by the Emperors Franz and Franz Joseph, or even by Admiral Horthy, which in each case also began with severe retaliation and finally arrived at the stage of winning recognition from more or less prestigious intellectuals as well. But one should not forget that all those who have represented, or accepted, these systems on a higher intellectual level, always did so with a good dollop of resignation, scepticism or even cynicism; this element is present here and now too. One often feels that here and now too. One often feels that here it has actually been a compromise between a leadership which after the great trauma of 1956 has become disillusioned, resigned, no longer wanting everything at any cost, and a country that has become disillusioned, cynical and striving for tangible, direct advantages. A country which twenty years ago was at the point of becoming the location of the most exciting socio-political experiment of the 20th century.

This estimate will certainly be judged as dark and malicious by those who—both in Hungary and abroad—assess the present system as the most humane and sensible form of socialism. There is really something in this, but the way I would put it is rather that it is the most cleverly governed dictatorship of the proletariat in history; this, however, could only be arrived at as a consequence of the events that had previously taken place here and led to general resignation. Nevertheless, there is a just question as to why the advantages and merits of this should not be recognised, particularly by someone whose main consideration is to have particular intellectual works brought to light, and if he does not want to be completely obstructed, he needs, in this, that or another form, the goodwill—or at least the tolerance—of this power, a power which does not want to make a one hundred per cent use of its opportunities to repress and censor and rests content with simply being recognised in general (which would not call for the denial of one's principles), but at the same time feels firm enough to take special efforts to gain the recognition even of those without whom it could get along wonderfully.

As far as I personally am concerned the question also arises: if between 1945 and 1947 I passionately cooperated in the fairly problematic acts inherent in the launching of a people's democracy, including fervent deeds of clear class-struggle nature such as the retraining of workers and peasants for posts in administrative leadership, why do I fuss in a much calmer and gentler period, and if at that time I put up with the silent disapproval of my gentlemanly kin and intellectual fellow-beings just as much as with their threats of impeachment then what is the matter with me now that the majority of these same people have long recognised this temperate and reasonable authority?

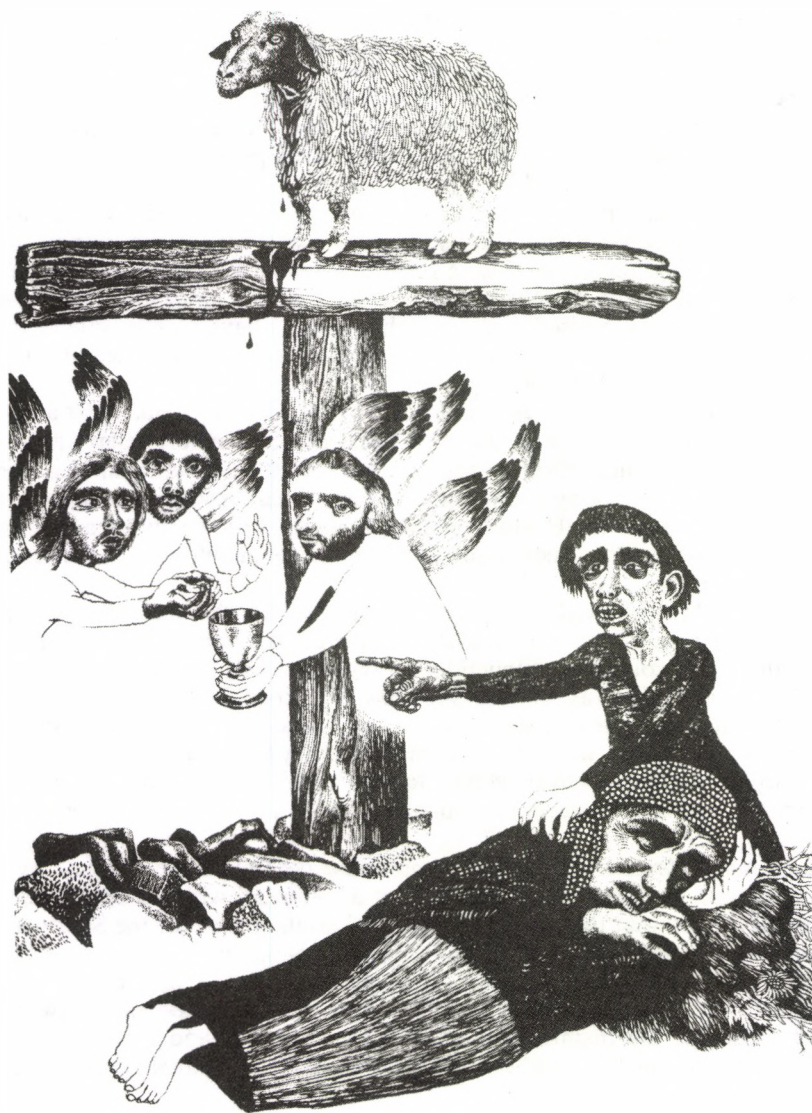
Because of this general recognition, this question regarding my person is always present indirectly, and not only in those who identify themselves with the present state authorities but also in those who have made compromising gestures despite their minor or major objections, and they seem to feel an unuttered judgement—possibly an unjustified, unnecessary and ostentatious judgement—comprised in the fact that so far I have been unable to follow suit. They may possibly even think that I wish for the return of the possibilities of political roles that have disappeared in the maw of history.

Naturally I have nothing to argue about with those who think one must always, under all circumstances come to terms with the established power, possibly referring, in way of a justification, to the tempestuous history of the Hungarians. I was brought up in a world which had a similar atmosphere, seeking compromise under any circumstances with the established powers, during the period of the Horthy—Bethlen consolidation. Partly because of my basically peaceable basic disposition, I could only slowly extricate myself from the effect of this but I did so once and for all.

I cannot argue, I have no right to argue, with those either who make these compromising gestures because they are aware that something of the utmost importance has been entrusted to them. Zoltán Kodály could attend functions arranged not only by sensible and tolerant state authorities but even by Mátyás Rákosi, since his only commitment was to safeguard the continuity of Hungarian music. There can be, and indeed are, such responsibilities more important than anything else today as well. But the thing I consider as such a commitment enjoined on me is to try and formulate certain facts of political science and social theory which I have recognised, and such gestures of recognition and compromise would be utterly out of place here.

The stand which demands a realistic compromise becomes more concrete by the fairly irrefutable statement that even those who do not agree at all with the established political system, must see clearly that the political weight and military force of the Soviet Union, and its commitment to a given system, constitute such an unambiguous fact, determining the position and policy of Hungary, that those who want to persuade anyone to disregard this, are inviting international suicide. This in essence is true. But there is a basic difference between a stupid disregard of facts and the maintenance of the inner freedom and independence of one's conscience and opinion, and this is true not only for a private individual but for a whole nation as well.

Because the very motives that prompted the Soviet Union to take those memorable steps in Hungary and Czechoslovakia which caused consternation in many parts of the world, are identical with the motives behind a mad armaments race on both sides, and which also motivate a series of interventions of evil memory on the part of the United States as well. And this armaments race, with the demented costs it involves, will make mankind unable to wrestle with the tasks it has to confront by the end of the millennium at the latest, in the form of hunger, overpopulation, environmental destruction and, last but not least, a potential nuclear war. So it is not a question of my wanting to propagate, specifically in Hungary, and in the form of the message that has been entrusted to me, political madness, but a question of my belief that I must try to expose and destroy a false alternative which splits the whole world and leads to its destruction.



Germans in Hungary

The ethnic Germans of Hungary are a specific case among the approximately 500,000 non-Hungarians in the country. Their particular position is largely due to the fact that they do not form a uniform, stable community that developed historically. Their ancestors arrived in Hungary at different times, coming from different places and in differing number, they settled virtually everywhere in the country and never formed a close economic, political, and cultural unit. There is a common culture based on a common language, common traditions and a faint consciousness of a common extraction; this is what makes it possible to consider this German national minority in Hungary as a unit. The features most typical of a national minority were found among the Germans in the Szepesség (Zips), Southern Hungary, the southern part of Transdanubia, and Western Hungary; they lived in identifiable areas, to a certain degree with a communal economy and a shared group consciousness. However, it is only among the Saxons of Transylvania that all the criteria of a national minority were fully present.

The evolution of Hungarian society added to the divided nature of the German minority in Hungary. As a society, theirs as a whole was deficient in Marxist terms (as were those of the other minorities) during the age of feudalism and emergent capitalism since they had no feudal nobility of their own. But it was also deficient within its various layers and groups, since the German burghers who settled in Hungary mostly in the Middle Ages and in lesser numbers during the eighteenth century and were entrenched with feudal privilege, usually had no contact whatsoever with the indentured peasants who arrived in the country in the eighteenth century to work for landholders and on crown lands. While the other ethnic groups outgrew this condition during the age of capitalism, the development of the German minority in Hungary made this impossible. As participants in capitalist development, the German middle class, which had taken on the economic functions of a non-existent or tiny Hungarian middle class, were rapidly Magyarised and thus became lost to their own ethnic group. The other minorities were settled in relatively closed blocks, not far from countries where they were the majority and this ensured fresh human and intellectual supplies for them; thus they were not unaffected by the spiritual awakening which brought nationalities to consciousness all over Europe, usually through the impulses steadily received from their major language area. The Germans were then connected by territorial proximity and a growing cultural and, in part, political consciousness, to the peoples of two empires, both much more powerful than Hungary or

the countries surrounding—namely to Austria and the German Empire. A national movement among the Germans in the territory of present-day Hungary received its first impetus, directly or indirectly, from Greater Austria and Greater Germany and this movement has always, up to the present day, found support from abroad.

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After the Magyar Conquest (A.D. 892–896), the Hungarian state was formed and the pagan Hungarians were christianized. The princely court itself was baptized by Bishop Bruno in 973, who came from Swabia. Gisela, wife of the first king of Hungary, St Stephen (1000–1038), was of Bavarian extraction; along with priests and missionaries, she also brought German knights to the country. The knights Hunt and Pázmány came to Hungary during the reign of Prince Géza, and the ancestor or the Ják clan, Wenzel von Wasserburg, also came here from Bavaria. Later, during the reign of King Géza II (1141–1162), the knightly forebears of the illustrious Hédervári and Kőszegi families, Welger and Heinrich, came from the Innsbruck region. During the reign of King Peter (1038–1041), two Swabian brothers, Gut and Keled, settled in the kingdom of Hungary, and several leading Hungarian aristocratic families traced their origin back to these knights. The new settlers were granted large estates, which they presumably peopled with their own vassals, with Germans.

Aside from priests and knights, the first wave of Germans settling in Hungary consisted almost entirely of villagers. The second wave included a fairly large proportion of burghers, who founded flourishing towns, became merchants, farmed royal and church revenues, and became market commissaries and counsellors.

German settlement in Hungary was an organic part of a pan-European demographic and economic process which saw population movement from the densely populated West European regions to the eastern part of Europe and the establishment of new villages and towns there. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Hungary mainly needed people to till the soil. The value of peasant labour was further increased by the huge loss of life during the Mongol invasion of Hungary (1241–42). King Béla IV's reforming policy granted lands to the Church and to secular landholders in hilly, wooded regions which had been uninhabited; this increased the amount of inhabited territory in the country. Since a great portion of the royal estates thus became private property, the way was opened for another

wave of German immigration; this time the incoming Germans (*hospes* was the name given to members of this wave from the Latin word for guest) were placed on private estates. So the German settlers found themselves wedged into rings of villages occupied by other nationalities, which in itself made the development of larger, closed enclaves impossible. They owed allegiance to the landlord concerned and the landlord could only grant them privileges which he himself enjoyed. He could not exempt them from paying tithes; thus those arriving in this second wave were at an economic disadvantage from the very outset. The *Heanzen* of Vas and Sopron counties, the region where the *Kőszegis*, the *Ják* clan, and the *Gut Keleds* (related to the *Hohenstauffens*) had been granted lands by the Hungarian kings were possibly of Bavarian origin. In the centuries to come, their legal status was much more advantageous than that of Hungarian serfs. Scattered German groups of low numbers were to be found at that time in the remote villages of the *Vértes* hills, in *Moson* and its environs, in the regions of the *Kraszna* and *Berettyó* rivers, and in *Gömör*, *Torna* and *Sáros* counties.

The burghers

Although the first town privileges in Hungary were granted to Walloons, the founding of towns was soon taken up by the Germans, and these towns adopted German civic codes. A large proportion of the Hungarian royal free boroughs were either German from the outset or became Germanised around the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. An example of the latter is the town of Sopron, where in the early fourteenth century Germans were still in a minority; by the end of the century, the large number of settlers arriving from Southern Germany, Lower Austria, and Styria had reversed the proportion. In the 1240s, Germans started moving onto the Buda castle hill and into the town of Óbuda. The Hungarian citizens in Buda felt so strongly about the German expansion in the city that in 1402 they rebelled against them; however, the German burghers, with the support of the Buda castellan and King Sigismund, regained their dominance. That was when the Buda Law Book was issued; this became the basis for Hungarian urban rights. The clauses stipulated that only citizens with four German grandparents could be elected to the post of magistrate. This meant the Germans had reserved for themselves the leadership of the city, ensuring an exclusive and dominant core. To avoid further conflicts with the Hungarians, they admitted two Hungarians to their twelve-member council, and one-third of the outer council of twenty-four, which counterbalanced the restricted leading body, were Hungarians. In 1483, another rebellion broke out in the city against the Germans,

and this swept away the system set up by the Germans. Soon after the two ethnic groups reached an agreement according to which the councils were to consist of Hungarians and Germans equally. Nonetheless, for a long time to come, the better-off German burghers maintained a decisive say in the management of the city's affairs.

The Saxons of Transylvania and the Szepesség

The first major ethnic group emerging as a result of organized settlement and to have privileges granted was that of the Transylvanian Saxons. Here the name Saxon does not refer to their place of origin but was used genetically for the different German groups who settled in the country under the provisions of Saxon law. The majority of the Transylvanian Saxons moved to the *Királyföld* (King's Country), which consisted of what, at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, between 1867–1918 were the *Nagykükküllő*, *Szeben*, *Brassó*, *Beszterce* and *Naszód* counties, in the 1140s, under the reign of King Géza II; they came from the Moselle and Middle-Rhine region. The parts they first peopled were *Nagyszeben* and its environs and the River *Olt* region east of it. *Beszterce* and its surroundings were also settled in the northern region at the same time and a third wave of Germans settled in the *Barcaság* region.

The feature of the Saxon settlement in Transylvania in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was that they were given land as a royal grant not as individuals but as communities. They were settled along border zones and lived in *Markgenossenschaften*, that is whit each small group in a closed village. Their joint ownership of land prevented the development of large or medium-size estates; this also meant that for a long time no nobility of their own evolved.

The patent issued by King Andrew II in 1224, enabled the Transylvanian Saxons to maintain for nearly 650 years their political autonomy in a foreign environment. The patent allowed them to retain their customs and to hold divine service in their own language. They paid church tithes to their own clergy and no Hungarian nobleman was allowed to acquire an estate within their territory. Religion played a large part in their being able to retain language and ethnic features over the centuries. The Reformation, more precisely Lutheranism, marked an important stage in their history. Adherence to their native language was in their eyes the most important factor in the autonomy they enjoyed in church matters. The language of the Church was German and was used from the pulpit, in the liturgy, and in the elementary and secondary schools run by the congregations. Of all the ethnic groups in Hungary, the Saxons were the first to set up a school of their own, in 1544 in *Brassó*. So the

Lutheran religion played a significant part, both through religious life and the education of the devout, in their maintaining a Saxon consciousness in cultural affairs as well.

It was also during the reign of King Géza II that the first Saxon settlers arrived in the Szepesség, bordering on Poland. This immigration lasted until the mid-thirteenth century. The privilege issued by King Stephen (1270–72) laid the foundations for their constitutional autonomy. The 24 towns in the Szepesség (Zips) formed a league, headed by a Saxon Markgraf, who became the ruler not only of the citizens of towns but of the whole Saxon territory of the Szepesség. To further their development, the towns were granted the right to hold markets, open mines, exemption from duties, and staple-rights. Their daily life was regulated by the *Zipser Willkür*, the statute book of the Saxons of the Szepesség, which they issued in 1370, modelled on the *Sachsenspiegel*, the Saxon lawbook.

A major factor in the economic prosperity of medieval Hungary was the mining of precious metal. The mining cities in Lower Hungary (Körmöcbánya, Selmezbánya, Besztercebánya, Újbánya, Bakabánya, Ligetbánya, Bélabánya and Breznóbánya) and Upper Hungary (Igló, Szomolnok, Merény, Szepesremete and Gölnicbánya, today all in Czechoslovakia) yielded about one-third of the world's gold and one-fourth of Europe's silver. The development of these towns is bound up with the German miners who were settled there by Hungarian kings in several waves and granted various privileges.

By a conservative estimate, by the end of the fifteenth century Hungary's population was close to four million, of which some 150,000 to 200,000 were Germans.

Conflicts between the towns and the nobility

Since in the Middle Ages the inhabitants of the biggest and most important towns in Hungary were principally German or at least with a high proportion of Germans (thus Buda, Kassa, Pozsony, Sopron, Nagyszeben, Brassó), the conflicts between the nobility and the middle classes mainly concerned Hungarians and Germans, and this may have lent them a tint of ethnic conflict. The nobility was always jealous of the citizens of towns enjoying liberties, who took advantage of their privileges and rarely admitted noblemen within their walls, though often opening their gates to fugitive serfs. The restrictions of the cities, however, were due to social and economic reasons and not to any ethnic problems. It was the matter of a society, making use of its own rights, coming up against newcomers, who wanted to break its unity and upset the existing social and economic order, possibly even its religious homogeneity. So the nobility went on battling

against the isolation of the cities until finally they acquired the right to settle in them. This, however, disrupted the closed ethnic unity of the German towns and contributed to their slow Magyarisation.

It is undeniable that there existed a kind of anti-German sentiment in historical Hungary, which had its historical reasons. German-Hungarian hostility sprang from the political relationship that developed between the Habsburgs and the Hungarians. The Hungarians defended their own political existence within the framework of the empire. Naturally they did not defend it against peaceful German citizens, and farmers in Hungary, who never desired political dominance, but against the foreign great power. This anti-German feeling became particularly strong in the eighteenth century, partly because of the large numbers of new German arrivals and partly because of some of the measures taken by the Austrian court.

Resettlement in the 17th and 18th centuries

The 150 years of Turkish occupation of Hungary and the many campaigns which finally led to the expulsion of the Turks, naturally disrupted the settlement structure that had developed and been firmly established over the previous centuries. There was an enormous fall in population figures as well. The role of reclaiming the land and recreating an economy and culture, however, was no longer assigned to the descendants of the medieval population. The principal part was played by enterprising serfs, who found themselves side by side, often by mere chance, with the foreigners coming into the country in the hope of finding favourable conditions or who were settled within organised schemes, all of whom had set out, upon the news of the expulsion of the Turks, towards the devastated regions and villages.

The vast majority of the newly arrived were Germans, at first only Catholic Germans. In the eyes of the Vienna court, a Catholic German adhered staunchly to his religion, the vehicle of culture, and was above all the prop of empire, not infected by Kuruc traditions.

As against the German settlers in the Middle Ages, an overwhelming majority of whom originated from the western and central regions of Germany, most of those arriving in the eighteenth century came from southern and western Germany. The settlement was organized by the Hofkammer and by wealthy landholders, some of foreign origin, who had been given huge estates formerly belonging to Hungarian landlords, either as rewards for war service or possibly in return for large loans to the Habsburg court in its financial difficulties.

In the first half of the eighteenth century the main area of settlement was Transdanubia, especially the Bakony, Vértes, and Buda hills and regions

in the counties of Baranya and Tolna. The bulk of the German settlers who arrived in large numbers in the early eighteenth century left their homes as poor people. Many of them were driven only by a sense of adventure, but the majority had been forced to immigrate by the hard conditions in the German provinces at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The newcomers mostly settled in villages, a few in market-towns; in most places they were received with hostility by the Hungarians, who identified them principally with foreign oppressors. This dislike was increased by the privileges the Germans were granted by the Hofkammer and by the landlords who had brought them in. In the Great Hungarian Plain, mostly inhabited by Calvinist Hungarians, religious differences added to the antipathy. Nor should it be forgotten that this was the time of the Counter-Reformation in Hungary, and so the Catholic Germans were looked upon as one of its oppressive instruments.

The Swabians

Even up to the present, Germans in Hungary are called Swabians in everyday parlance. This name was given to all the Germans in the country in the eighteenth century. The Germans who had settled in Western Hungary in the Middle Ages and the German citizens of towns sharply objected, as earlier the name Swabian had been used mainly for shepherds, while now it became tantamount to the German peasant. The reason was that a considerable proportion of the peasants who came to Hungary in the eighteenth century arrived from Swabian regions. Their main centres in Hungary were in Baranya, Tolna and Somogy counties, so that this region was nicknamed the *Schwäbische Türkei*. But there were also blocks of Swabian settlement in Szatmár County and in the Bácska and Bánát regions.

The Germans who were settled in Hungary in the eighteenth century, mainly at the expense of the Habsburg court, running to several million forints, were not suited to the task intended for them by the court, namely to Germanise Hungarians. They could not be suited for this, if only because of their numbers, partly because they were hemmed into enclaves surrounded by other inhabitants, and partly because, by keeping to themselves, they became isolated. Religious and political clashes with the Hungarians and, by no means a minor factor, the growing numbers and activity of the Slav and Rumanian ethnic groups also had their effects.

There are two more important factors to be borne in mind. The Germans of peasant origin who settled in Hungary in the eighteenth century, for a long time neither established nor were able to establish any relationship with the various Germans

that had been living here since the Middle Ages and had attained considerable economic influence due to the privileges that had devolved on them. In this regard, one has only to mention the German burghers in the royal free boroughs or in the Saxon cities of Transylvania, and the Szepesség. Indeed, by the second half of the nineteenth century, it had become customary among the well-to-do middle classes in the southern regions, in Pozsony, Sopron, and in the Szepesség, to underplay the social standing of the Germans: the term "gentleman" was identified with Hungarian and they used "German" mostly to mean craftsmen, vine-dressers, and labourers. At the same time, the disappearance of German as a first language was also hastened by the drying up of fresh immigrants. This process can be observed in the groups of Germans who were living in small blocks in geographical and cultural isolation, in contrast with those Germans in Baranya and Tolna counties who lived in larger blocks. The slow linguistic assimilation was blocked for a time by the Emperor Joseph II's legislation of 1784, which made German the official language of Hungary. This act undoubtedly gave rise in many places to anti-German sentiment; the response was not long in arriving in the form of linguistic seclusion as a self-defence.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, mainly due to the large resettlements, the number of Germans in Hungary had reached the one million mark and they were to be found in 40 of the 64 counties of the country.

Styles of co-habitation

In 1981, an old Swabian peasant living in the village of Cikó, Tolna County, said that "I think there was a kind of reserve in us because we felt ourselves as aliens but at the same time we wanted to remain alien. Different languages, different morals. But this was, somehow or other, what made the world. We could not even imagine things any other way." Reserve and isolation were in fact the most important and most conscious features of those Germans who settled in Hungary in the eighteenth century. The new country only meant for them a home that lacked a national consciousness, the perpetuating power of history and literature, and so as a social group they were unable to think in terms of history. To this sense of abandonment, into this intellectual vacuum, it was the Volksbund which later brought the illusion of a large community and most of them did not even notice that the Third Reich abused their enthusiasm.

In contrast to those who came to Hungary in the eighteenth century, those Germans who had lived here for many centuries, were sensitive to changes. Depending on the geographical position or economic interests of their place of residence, the

Germans reacted with different behaviour patterns. Those in small towns in the border regions, principally near the western borders, were slower to assimilate and more guarded in their response to the Hungarian cause often because of their proximity to and economic links with Austria. For these Magyarisation was only on the surface and, as a result, they developed forms of Hungarian-German coexistence differing from those, for instance, in Pest-Buda or in the towns of Upper Northern Hungary. A uniform emotional and political position simply cannot be spoken of.

Those Germans inclining towards integration, sympathised with the efforts of the Hungarian bourgeoisie in the Reform Age. It was then that the question of a "native country" and "patriotism" emerged. A generally accepted notion among them was that native country and state were identical. The citizen of the state must, regardless of his nationality, be a patriot. For the patriotic-minded German bourgeoisie, liberalism and liberty were equivalent to the Hungarian reform ideas. They did not wish for new formations of the state or a separate German state within the existing one. In the first half of the nineteenth century a definite process of Magyarisation emerged, mainly among those wedged into Hungarian surroundings, as for example in Győr, Szeged, and Pest-Buda. This emotional integration preceded linguistic assimilation. When, in the Reform Age, the animosity between national minorities went beyond linguistic and literary limits and took on an increasingly political character, the progressive sections of the German burghers considered Magyarisation principally as a political stance. The experience of Hungarianness had a strongly literary taste for the first generation of Germans in Hungary, while for the second generation it had a political taste. It is easy to understand why the younger generation of ethnic Germans joined the Hungarian national movement after 1840. Education, social influences, natural ambition, a fear of isolation, and the intoxicating ideas of liberty all contributed to this. Later, during the 1848-49 Revolution this sentiment spread beyond the bourgeoisie to a considerable part of the village and market town artisans and peasants. The soldiers of General Damjanich proudly called themselves Hungarian Swabians, and Lajos Kossuth also explicitly recognised the valour of the Swabians in Hungary. During the Hungarian Revolution the Hungarian army had three legions of ethnic Germans, and there were Germans among the generals and the headquarters staff as well. How ill at ease the Habsburg court felt about the ethnic Germans backing the Hungarian side, is borne out by the appeal the Austrian General Haynau issued in 1849: "... it came as a cruel disappointment that those who are German in their language and customs, have also participated in the creation of the phantasmal edifice of the Hungarian republic."

Assimilation or local patriotism

Apart from the Jews, it was the Germans who adopted Hungarian ways at the fastest rate during the rise of capitalism in Hungary. This was greatly helped by a common religion, similar historical and cultural traditions, and several centuries of cohabitation.

Where assimilation is concerned, three groups can be distinguished among the ethnic Germans: burghers who had become assimilated, petty bourgeois retaining folk traditions, and those rising from the ranks of the peasantry. First and most forcefully appeared the assimilated burgher. The German burgher lived in a Hungarian town along with the Hungarian nobleman. He saw, sensed, and experienced the life, way of thinking, and values of the gentry. The desire for social advance made this model an ideal in his eyes. He wished to be a gentleman like the Hungarian nobleman and so began to imitate him. At first, this was only in external features but later he was willing to shake off the signs of his German origin and burgher's lifestyle. The concepts of gentleman and Hungarian became identical in public thinking; those becoming gentlemen also became Hungarians as well.

There was also a tradition-bound, moderate type among the German burghers, inclined towards compromise. They became Hungarian only outwardly, their ardour being a sham ardour. In their daily life, they continued to nurture German family relations, customs, and culture. They loved their country and the Hungarians, but did not want to become one with them in consciousness. The most striking feature of this group was its local patriotism.

The third type consisted of the sons of the Germans in the villages and small towns of Transdanubia and the southern part of the country. Assimilation among them was hastened by the system of inheritance, which they brought with them and retained. Some of the boys of a family went to school or into industry, they lost contact with the closed life of their village and sooner or later accommodated themselves to the Hungarians. The quickest and most successful way to assimilation was through family admixture. People in the cities did not know each other and were not burdened by the scorn and the oppressive, watching eyes of the narrow community, a sense of having become an outcast; thus young Germans married into non-German families without any major difficulty. The assimilation of this Swabian layer differed from that of the historical ethnic Germans, with their different traditions and opportunities which made their merging also different.

There are a great many Hungarians of German extraction in the arts, sciences, and culture. Statistics as a discipline was founded in Hungary by Márton Schwartzner, one of the first modern literary

scholars was Ferenc Toldy, who came from a German family in Buda. Of the Hunfalvy brothers, who came from the Szepesség and were of German origin, János made his name as a geographer, while Pál excelled in Hungarian linguistics. Miklós Ybl, the marvellous nineteenth-century architect came from a Székesfehérvár German family; also of German extraction was the illustrious architect Imre Steindl, who designed the Parliament building in Budapest. Others included Frigyes Schulek, who built the Fishermen's Bastion and reconstructed the Coronation Church in Budapest's Castle district, the sculptors János Fadrusz and Alajos Strobl, the painter Mihály Munkácsy, and the composers Ferenc Liszt and Ferenc Erkel.

The Volksbund; deportations

In 1939, Hitler launched a campaign to resettle ethnic Germans in Germany, in the course of which about 85,000 Germans moved from Hungary to Germany.

I have already mentioned why the policy pursued by Hitler's Third Reich was able to create the illusion of a larger community for some of the ethnic Germans in Hungary. In 1940, Hitler signed an "ethnic group agreement" with the Horthy government, which ensured a privileged position for those ethnic Germans who joined the *Volksbund* in Hungary. The agreement enabled the Third Reich gradually to withdraw members of the *Volksbund* from the jurisdiction of the Hungarian authorities and put them under German authority. Some Hungarian Germans at first volunteered for the SS, 12,000 of them from the territories which had been annexed from Hungary by the 1920 Treaty of Trianon and then re-annexed during the war, and 6,000 from the post-Trianon country. A second recruitment treaty was signed with the Kállay government in May 1943, which concerned individuals of German origin in the Hungarian army and this added another 20,000 to the SS, half of them being Germans from the Bácska. Finally, in the spring of 1944, a third recruitment agreement allowed for the enlistment of ethnic Germans in Hungary between the ages of 17 and 67; this sent between 60,000 to 80,000 to the front lines.

By the autumn of 1942, the *Volksbund* had 200,000 members in Hungary; taken together with the women's organization, the *Deutsche Frauenschaft*, and the youth organization *Deutsche Jugend*, the total came to 300,000. According to official data, the total number of Germans in Hungary (including the territories assigned by the two Vienna Awards) was 719,000; this means that about 42 per cent of all the ethnic Germans in the country were members of the *Volksbund*. By the spring of 1944, membership had fallen to between 230,000 and 240,000. Nonetheless, the influence the *Volks-*

bund exerted was larger than its simple numerical strength would have one expect. By the end of 1945, official Hungarian statistics gave the proportion of *Volksbund* members and those under its influence as 70 per cent of the ethnic Germans in Hungary. This went a long way to causing Hungarian public opinion after 1945 to identify the country's German minority with the *Volksbund* and to look upon them as a fifth column of the Third Reich's (similar to the Sudeten Germans and the Sub-Carpathian Germans in Czechoslovakia) and to cast them as the leading culprits for the tragedy of the Hungarian people.

The Potsdam Declaration had a paragraph which concerned the Germans living in Hungary: "Having examined the question from every side, the three governments acknowledge that measures should be taken concerning the resettlement of the German inhabitants, or some of them, remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, in Germany." In accordance with the agreement reached, the deportation of Germans from Hungary started in 1946 and lasted, with brief intervals, up to the end of the same year; they were sent to the American zone in Germany. This was followed, in August 1947, by another wave of deportation, this time to the Soviet zone of Germany, where ethnic Germans were arriving from Hungary as late as 1948. A government decree issued in March 25, 1950, brought an end to the deportations and re-established the equal status of the ethnic Germans remaining in the country. During the three years in which deportation was being carried out, 170,000 Germans were moved to the British, French and U.S. zones, 54,000 to the Soviet occupied zone and 15,000 to Austria. No truly objective treatment of this period, free of emotion and prejudice, exists as yet, either by a Hungarian or a German historian; a particular cause of the difficulty in so doing lies in the many abuses that occurred in the course of the registration and deportation and which led to people being expelled from their country who had nothing to do either with the *Volksbund* or the SS. Many such did in fact move back later to Hungary, when times became more peaceful.

After the Second World War

The fear of deportation and confiscation resulted in the statistical figures on ethnic Germans in Hungary showing an extremely confused picture which does not in the least reflect the real situation of the time. In 1941, 475,000 people in Hungary declared themselves to be German. Of these, some 255,000 left Hungary, either voluntarily or under compulsion. This implies that 220,000 remained in the country. By 1949, however, a total of 22,000 set themselves down as German. So what could be the explanation for the missing 220,000? The answer

lies partly in the fact that, in 1941, there were advantages for an individual to call himself German and there was a considerable pressure from the *Volksbund* to do so. Thus many ethnic Germans who were already Magyarised, had themselves registered as speaking German as a first language. After 1945, on the other hand, the misgivings mentioned already had the reverse effect.

Official figures give 50,000 Germans living in Hungary in 1960 and 45,000 ten years later. In this context, it is worth mentioning a survey the Democratic Association of Germans in Hungary carried out in 1987 among pupils at *gimnáziums* using German as the language of instruction or with special German-language departments. Of a total of 800 pupils, 130 responded to the questionnaires; of these only 95 declared themselves to be Germans.

Today, ethnic Germans live in some 400 communities in Hungary, with their numbers being some between 200,000 and 220,000.

The Stalinist political climate of the 1950s was far from propitious for national minorities in Hungary. Education in German only began in 1952, the first German-language kindergartens were opened in the academic year of 1953–54, the training of German teachers was started in 1956, in Pécs; the same year also saw the opening of the first German-language *gimnázium* in Baja. Despite all these efforts, the annual report of the Democratic Association of Germans in Hungary almost every year carries news of the grave linguistic crisis facing ethnic Germans in the country. There are a number of reasons for this, one of them, according to the 1987 survey of the Association, being that although more than 27,000 ethnic Germans receive instruction in German in schools, only half of the 300-odd teachers are qualified German teachers. According to preliminary surveys, in the school year of 1987–88, 207 German teachers were needed, with at least another 121 of them required by 1991–92. Recently German kindergartens have opened in Nagynyárád, Mecseknádasd, and Gyöngyös, on an experimental basis, where German is used all the time. Such experiments, unfortunately, often fail through a shortage of staff. The near future is supposed to produce a change in the field of nursery schools, because from 1987 onwards kindergarten teachers have been trained in Sopron as well as in Baja for ethnic Germans; in 1988, eight kindergarten teachers had the opportunity to attend four-week courses in West Germany, which must have acted as an additional incentive.

Up to the autumn of 1987, ethnic German organizations in Hungary could maintain official relations only with the GDR, but the visit of Károly Grósz, then prime minister, to Bonn, led to a significant change; he signed a cooperation agreement between the two governments to nurture the language of the ethnic Germans in Hungary. This lays down that West Germany will provide assistance in the building and equipment of bilingual schools (since the lack of financial provisions has delayed the construction of German-Language schools and colleges in Baja, Bonyhád, Pesterzsébet, and Pilisvörösvár, featured in the plans already for years), that West Germany will support the German departments of the Hungarian universities through scholarships, the supply of language teachers, and the expansion of the library network, and will grant financial aid to the German Repertory Theatre in Szekszárd and the Nicolaus Lenau House to be constructed in Pécs. At the same time the German minority has a much greater need and demand than before for textbooks and publications which introduce young people to the political, economic, cultural, and intellectual inheritance of ethnic Germans in Hungary. It is hoped that this will be helped by an agreement signed by the then Hungarian Minister of Culture Béla Köpeczi and the Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg, Lothar Späth, on March 11, 1988, to foster the language and culture of ethnic Germans in Hungary. It is no coincidence that one of the signatories was the Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg, since most of the relatives of the German minority in Hungary now live in this land, and are enthusiastic about establishing twinning agreements between cities and villages. In addition, Lothar Späth is also the chief patron of the *Donauschwaben* (Danubian Swabians), a foundation aimed at furthering inter-city relations and exchanges for the young and for the arts. The *Land* government has offered two million marks towards all this.

The leaders of the ethnic Germans in Hungary are aware of the fact that financial assistance from West Germany cannot solve everything. They have to reconsider how to represent the interests of the German minority, a representation that has so far mostly been formal, and to make it understood that people with two languages and two cultures are much richer than those who possess only one.

Zoltán Ács

The Rochester Royal Murder Mystery

The murder of a Prince of Transylvania on British soil in 1661 is surrounded by mystery which has endured to this day. The register of Rochester Cathedral of those buried within its precinct in the Year of Grace 1661 gives pride of place to "Cossuma Albertus, a Prince of Transylvania."

In the last century, the Victorian writer-historian G. H. Palmer¹ referred to the murder of the Transylvanian Prince in some detail and the *Archeologia Cantiana* devoted considerable space to this curious murder story. It described the victim as "Cossuma Albertus, a Prince of Transylvania, in the dominions of the King of Poland" who, "being worsted by the German forces, and compelled to seek for relief, came to our gracious King Charles II for succour."²

It then proceeded to recount the grisly murder of this good prince at Rochester's Gad Hill, "that high old robbing hill," the apprehension of his assailants and his stylish funeral in the cathedral itself.

Neither G. H. Palmer, nor the writer of the *Archeologia Cantiana* account of Prince Cossuma's murder at Rochester questioned the veracity of the contemporary reports upon which they based their own stories. To most people Transylvania is a faraway, nebulous country of swirling mists, high mountains, werewolves and Count Dracula. So what was a ruling prince of that distant land doing in rural Kent during Charles II's reign and, more importantly, why was he murdered on British soil? This question becomes even more pressing as a glance at the official history of Transylvania and Hungary, its mother country, reveals that the principality never had a prince of that name, nor was it ever in "the dominions of the King of Poland."

At the invitation of the Very Reverend John Arnold, Dean of Rochester Cathedral, I took a fresh look at this centuries-old crime that had baffled historians and researchers for so long.

Two contemporary English news-sheets offered a good starting-point for the investigation into the true identity of this "Prince of Transylvania" whose mortal remains still grace Rochester Cathedral. *Mercurius Publicus*³ reported in its October 26, 1661, issue that "on Tuesday last, the Body of Cossuma Albertus, a Prince of Transylvania (which was most inhumanly murdered robb'd and mangled in the Parish of Strood, within a mile of this place, by his own servants Isaac Jacob, alias Jacques, by Religion a Jew, his Coach-man, and Cassimirus Kansagi his Foot-man) was Honorably interred in this place." It then went on to describe the solemnity of the Prince's funeral.

Another contemporary source, now in the Bodleian Library in Oxford,⁴ takes the murder story a step further drawing on the interrogation of the two suspects accused of Prince Cossuma Albertus's murder. Writing in the best tradition of Grub Street, Robert Vaughan, a pamphleteer with printing presses in London's Saint Martin's published towards the end of 1661 all the gory details of the prince's murder embroidered with a lot of sanctimonious cant about men of hardened hearts whose cruel, murderous bent "cannot be curbed any longer by the Fear of God or the Punishment inflicted by the good Laws of this Nation."

The sensational murder of a prince was given the full Grub Street treatment and graced with the headline: "A True and Exact Relation of the Horrid and Cruel Murther Lately committed upon Prince Cossuma Albertus By his Own Attendants, near Rotchister in Kent." A sub-head intended to catch the eye offered details of "How the Barbarous Murtherers were apprehended and brought before the Right Hon. Richard Brown, Knight and Baronet, Lord Mayor of the City of London."

The fact that the interrogation of the murder suspects was conducted by the Lord Mayor of London was an indication that contemporary British society was concerned and puzzled by the case.

The pamphleteer provided a baffling piece of information about the murdered Prince's title and the royal favours he had enjoyed in Britain.

"Cossuma Albertus, a Prince in the Dominions of the King of Poland, being by the Germane Forces worsted and forced to seek for relief, came to our Gracious King for succour, of whom he found a kind Reception, and a sufficient maintenance."⁵

Vaughan's account implies, though does not give exact figures, that Charles II gave the refugee Prince a "considerable sum of money" to allow him to lend a life suited to his station and to help him recover his land from the Catholic Habsburgs.

While this explained his presence in Britain, it did not make clear what the Prince was doing in the neighbourhood of Rochester, which could not have been of any interest to a refugee Prince concerned with recovering his country from the Habsburgs.

The Grub Street pamphleteer did not bother to address himself to this question, he merely reported that "this good Prince having occasion to go to Rotchister in Kent, on Saturday October 19, 1661, carried a considerable sum of money with him, and took only his Coach-man and Foot-boy."

The details of the Prince's murder according

to Vaughan, based on the attendants' confession, would appear to indicate that he was killed for his money, although the murderers' attempt to "mangle" him does not quite fit this simple picture.

"This Coach-man knowing what money he took with him, agreed with the Foot-boy to tell him when his Master was asleep (it being usual with him to sleep when he went on such long journeys). When they came within two miles of Rochester, this Prince being asleep, his Coach-man (whose name is Isaac Jacomb alias Jackques a Jew) having a long Knife ready for that use, stabs his Prince to the heart; Then the Prince cried out *Lord have mercy upon me, will you be Prince of my Country?*

After this the Coach-man and Foot-man pul'd him out of the Coach, then drew out the Prince's Hanger, and cut off his head, and pulled out both his eyes, cut off his Chin, and mangled his Face, that so no one might discover who he was, then they cut off one of his Arms, and when they had done all this to hide their Villany, they threw his Body into a Ditch, and his Head about two Furlongs off in another place."⁶

Vaughan then related the chance discovery of the dismembered body by a country doctor out for a walk with his dog, and the eventual arrest of Cossuma Albertus's coachman and footman when the former was trying to sell the Prince's hanger and other belongings at the Burcher Lane street market. This was near the George Inn, in Lumbar Street in South London where Cossuma Albertus had his lodgings. But a grocer from Lumber Street who knew the Prince, according to Vaughan, became suspicious "why he should sell those things; But finding no sufficient but a sispitious answer, caused him to be apprehended."⁷

Together with the footman, named as Cossumerius (Karsagi), Isaac Jacomb was taken to the Lord Mayor for interrogation. They denied ever having met the Prince of Transylvania.

"When the Lord Mayor examined him [Isaac], he denied that he ever saw the Prince in his Life; Then the Mayor caused him to be searched, and in his pocket was found a bloody hancherchief, the Lord asked how that came, he said by cutting his thumb; they found also in his pocket five pieces of eight, and a hundred and fifty Rix-dolors, which he had changed for gold in Lumber Street, and at his lodging at the Jews tent in Dules Place they found one hundred and forty pounds."⁸

The Lord Mayor also ascertained that the pair left the Prince's coach and horses—10 Grays—at Greenhithe, near Rochester at an inn and paid the oastler handsomely to look after the horses 'till they came again."⁹

Vaughan's pamphlet ends with a moral caution and the remark that the country had come to a sad pass when a Prince who came to this country for succour could be murdered by his own servants. But the writer of the report in the *Mercurius Publi-*

cus gave his readers the satisfaction that this unfortunate foreign prince was at least given a right royal funeral in Rochester.

"His body being brought to the Parish of Strood, was accompanied from thence to the West door of the Cathedral Church of Rochester by the Prebendaries of the said Church in their Formalities, with the Gentry and Commonality of the said City and places adjacent, with Torchcs before them: Near the Cathedral they were met by the Choir, who sung *Te Deum* before them; when Divine Service was ended, the Choir went before the Body to the Grave (which was made in the Body of the Church) singing *Nunc Dimittis*.

"Thousands of people flockt to his Funeral; amongst whom many gave large commendations of the Dean and Chapter of this Cathedral, who bestowed so Honorable an Interment on a stranger at their own proper costs and charges."¹⁰

The reports of these seventeenth century journalists, while providing useful basic information, pose more questions than they answer owing to the haphazard and unreliable method of news gathering of the time. The story of the Transylvanian Prince's sojourn and murder in this country just does not add up. Worse still, on the margin of Vaughan's penny-dreadful next to the title of the Prince a seventeenth-century hand left a message: "Twas commonly reported yet he was a cheat, no prince."¹¹

Whoever scribed these damning words must have reflected gossip current in London at the time; he certainly would not have invented the accusation.

Surprisingly, the two servants accused of Cossuma Albertus's murder made no claim during their interrogation that their Prince was an impostor. Yet such a claim, if cleverly presented, could have provided them with a kind of defence and saved their necks, making the case even curiouser.

The surviving contemporary evidence cannot now be taken at face value. Every piece of information, every carelessly introduced aside, must therefore be examined with especial care in order to unravel the mystery surrounding the Transylvanian Prince, so well received by Charles II.

In the quest for the true identity of the murdered Prince a process of elimination offered a reasonable if negative start. The princes and kinglings of Central and Eastern Europe entertained a great many claims to neighbouring lands and thrones. But there was no valid claim by any prince, let alone one described as "a Prince in the Dominions of the King of Poland" to the principality of Transylvania which formed part of the Hungarian Crown since the eleventh century. The ruling Prince of Transylvania until 1660 was György Rákóczi II, who had tried to snatch the crown of Poland with the aid of his Swedish ally, King Charles X, but was defeated and killed in battle in May 1660. His successor was

János Kemény. The annals of Transylvania showed conclusively that there was no princely family of Cossuma.

In Poland, John Casimir (or Jan Kazimier) was the King from 1648 to 1668. He was a former Jesuit novice and Habsburg mercenary before ascending the Polish throne, but he was a weak and ineffectual ruler whose writ did not run outside his palace. He had no claim to Transylvania to make Cossuma Albertus "a Prince in the Dominions of the King Poland."

Indeed, his family, the Polish branch of the Vasa, lost its claim to the Swedish throne in 1660, its only hope of wealth and real power.

Researchers consulted at the universities of Cambridge, Budapest, Prague, and Dublin agreed that the mystery Prince murdered at Rochester could not have been a Transylvanian. This line of inquiry drew a blank. But if the Transylvanian princely cap did not fit the head, a fresh, unbiased look at the portrait of Cossuma Albertus—drawn by seventeenth-century journalists—could, it seemed, provide a new start for the investigation.

The question of identity in this case was based on a title, apparently non-existent, and a name. But where did the name come from and who recorded it? The chain can be verified even after a lapse of 327 years: the two seventeenth-century journalists recorded it after hearing it pronounced following the interrogation of Isaac Jacomb and Cossumerius Karsagi by the Lord Mayor of London. The foreign Prince's name was not transcribed from documents but from the verbal form the men who caused the two servants to be arrested had provided. One was a Cockney grocer from London's Burcher Lane, the other the arresting constable. Neither would have been expert at pronouncing foreign names.

Seventeenth-century policemen when they appeared in the pages of history were usually described as ignorant, low-born incompetents, dignified with names like Dogberry, Dull or Elbow. The pronunciation of a tongue-twisting foreign name would not have been the strong suit of the illiterate policeman who arrested Isaac and Karsagi at the London street market.

An analysis of the sounds making up the name Cossuma in Cockney rendering leads from the phonetic approximation of Cossuma to Kosuma < Kasime < Kasime(r). And the nearest Continental princely name would be Casimir or Kazimier, the Polish ruling family's name in the 1660s. The throw-away line of "a Prince in the Dominions of the King of Poland" would thus make sense though without the Transylvanian link.

The correctness of this working hypothesis was underscored by the clearly phonetic rendering of Karsagi's Christian name—Casimir or Cossumerius—in the extant news-sheets. His surname is, even in the possible phonetic variants, an easily recognizable Transylvanian Hungarian name, and

therefore his Christian name could only have been Kázmér, usually transliterated abroad as Kazimir. The key phonemes being identical, both the Prince's surname and the footman's Christian name became, in the pronunciation of the Cockney grocer and policeman Kosime(r) with a silent r, spelled as Cossuma by the seventeenth-century reporters. The link between Cossuma and the Polish royal house of Kasimier is thus established.

Theories are one thing, hard documentary evidence quite another. Clearly in an investigation like this there is no substitute for proof. Those who had tried their hands at resolving the mystery of the Transylvanian Prince's murder had concluded that there were no Transylvanian or Polish sources which mention a Prince Cossuma and assumed that he was probably some Polish adventurer, and left it at that.

But the excitement of the search for the mystery man behind the Transylvanian Prince was too strong to allow one to accept defeat that easily.

The last chance of finding any documentary evidence relating to the murder case of Cossuma Albertus, it seemed, would be among the minutes of the murderers' trial. Since the news-sheets mentioned that, after Karsagi's full confession both men were sentenced to death and Isaac, the coachman, was "hanged in chains" at the spot where the Prince was murdered, it seemed more likely that the trial must have taken place nearby, not in London.

Kent murder cases would have been heard at the Maidstone Assizes. The surviving trial documents from the 1661 Autumn assizes proves a disappointment. But the dust-covered bundle of the Spring, 1662, assizes documents in the Public Record Office in London confirmed the correctness of the hunch: four discoloured and crumbling parchments containing the Prince's inquest and the indictment against the murders were waiting to be brought to light after lying forgotten for 326 years.¹²

The documents of the Prince's murder trial, heard by Sir Orlando Bridgman, the Lord Chief Justice of Common Pleas in March, 1662, contained not only documentary evidence of the Prince's true identity but also pointers to the cause of the Rochester murder. For while the Latin shorthand of the court scribe was terse to the point of incomprehensibility, he nevertheless settled authoritatively the name of "Prince Cossuma" and shed new light on the identity of his murderers, giving a fresh start to the present investigation.

The indictment names the victim as "Albertus Cassimyer Pollones Armiger"—Albert Cassimyer, a Pole, Gentleman. His attackers at Strood on October 19, 1661, were identified as "Isaac Jacob alias Jacques of Gravesend, a labourer," and "Cosimerius Karsegey of Gravesend, a Gentleman." Karsegey is an easily recognizable phonetically anglicised form of Karsági or Karcagi, both Hungarian

or Transylvanian Hungarian names, which could be spelled either with an 'i' or a 'y' pending on the noble or common origins of the person. Since the official documents declared the Prince's servant an 'esquire', he would have spelled his name Karságy, or Karcagy.

A second document freshly unearthed contains the findings of the inquest, described as "a criminal inquisition," held at Strood two days after the Prince's murder before "Robert Heath Gentleman, the Coroner."¹³ It confirms the identities of the victim and his assailants and, like the indictment, accuses Isaac of the murder and Karságy of aiding and abetting. The Prince had his throat cut, was stabbed in the chest and beheaded. Both sets of documents give the motive of the murder as theft, and the indictment gives an apparently complete list of all the goods and chattels the pair stole from their victim.

The six good men and true of Maidstone who acted as jurors—William Willmore, Richard Blaney, Nathaniel Mannocke, Thomas Redwell, Nicholas Spearman and William Childs—found the two guilty of theft and murder. Sir Orlando then pronounced sentence: "Isaac Jacob alias Jacques, Cosimerius Karsegey, having committed several felonies, thefts and murder shall be severally hanged by the neck until they be dead".¹⁴

But the most startling indication to emerge from these official documents is that nothing in this curious story is what it appeared to be in 1661 and as the present annals of Rochester Cathedral claim. The "Prince of Transylvania" was a Polish gentleman with no claim to the principality and a phoney hard-luck story of "having been worsted by the German forces" and "forced to seek relief" from Charles II.

His use of a double Christian name—Albertus Cassimyer—like Poland's Vasa King, John Casimir, was an elementary mistake. Although he must have chosen it to lend verisimilitude to his claim to be a Prince of Transylvania and at the same time to indicate his kinship with the Casimir on the throne of Poland, this would have been a dead giveaway

to anyone acquainted with Transylvania. The rulers of the principality used their surnames as their title was elective, not inherited. There was no princely ruling house of Transylvania, but Albertus Cassimyer obviously did not know it.

He could not even have been a kinsman of John Casimir, because the king had no legitimate or illegitimate children, and two of his brothers were clerics, the other two also went to their graves without issue. It is true that his elder brother, King Wladyslaw IV, had a son who died young, and had also had an illegitimate son by Jadwiga Luskowska of Lwow, the Count of Wassenau. The latter was an acknowledged royal bastard, but he would have been too young to have a son to masquerade as "Prince of Transylvania" in 1661. So while Albertus Cassimyer might have been putting it about that he belonged to the ruling family of Casimir this claim had no basis in fact.

This rules out a princely background, shows up conclusively that Albert Cassimyer was a gentleman confidence trickster and alters dramatically his sojourn in England.

That he was a nobleman was confirmed by the court and also by a silver coat of arms which Isaac was trying to sell after his murder at the London street market. There were tens of thousands of impoverished Polish noblemen at the time many of them roaming Europe as soldiers of fortune.

But because of his use of Cassimyer as a surname the circle of possible candidates can be reduced to those bearing the name Kazimirski, which is closest to Casimir/Cassimyer when the Polish -ski suffix is dropped as Albert would have done in England. There were two big Kazimirski clans at the time: one was the Kazimirski family with a Bieberach coat of arms. The other Kazimirski clan was a radical Protestant heretic family which, together with several thousand other heretics, known as Arians, was expelled from Poland by the Diet in 1658. Some 500 of them, including two prominent Arians with the surname of Kazimirski, were offered asylum in Transylvania.

The rest wandered on the West European Protestant circuit and, no doubt some ended up in Protestant England. But they all would have known something about Transylvania. And Albert Cassimyer would most likely have belonged to this group of impecunious Poles forced to live by their wits. Even his arrival in England would fit in with the expulsion of Arians from Poland.

As for Karságy, this young footboy-footman mentioned in the news-sheets turns out to be a well-born Esquire, not a lowly servant, according to the court documents. Like the coachman, Isaac, he is described in the indictment as "late of Gravesend," while his employer was lodging at the George Inn, Lumber Street. This would appear to indicate that this Hungarian-Transylvanian nobleman was already established in this country with a

* A unique feature of the case, unparalleled in English legal practice, is the fact that Isaac and Karságy were tried twice for the same murder. According to Vaughan's later news-sheet on the arraignment of the two, dated mid-December, 1661, the first trial took place on Friday, December 13, at the Session House, Old Bailey in London. Isaac having said that "he was not guilty of wilful murder, the Court told him they thought it would not be found so, and thereupon the Jury went upon them, who brought them in both *guilty*. But the Prudence of the Judicious Court in doing Justice was such, after the Jury gave their *verdict* in, that they thought it not meet for them to suffer here, but where they had done the Fact, therefore Condemned them not, but *ordered* them to be sent to Maidstone Sizes in Kent, there to be further Tried, and receive reward for what they had done."

fixed address in Gravesend before he joined forces with Isaac.

The trial documents describe Isaac as "a labourer," also of Gravesend, revealing that his place of permanent residence was in the south of England.

That is fairly significant as Jews had only been allowed by Cromwell to settle in this country a few years earlier. His French-sounding alias, Jacques, recorded both by the contemporary reporters and the court clerk, would indicate that before coming to England he must have been living in a French-speaking country. The news-sheet *Mercurius Publicus*¹⁵ also provides a further pointer to Isaac's itinerant life-style in England when recounting the money recovered "from his lodging at the Jews tent in *Dukes Place*," indicating that he had a kind of *pied à terre* in London near the temporary lodgings of his employer.

The collaboration among the three when it started resulted in a dramatic rearrangement of their respective stations in life, something people did not easily accept in the seventeenth century. Thus Albert Cassimyer, a minor Polish nobleman, became a ruling Prince of Transylvania defeated by the Catholic Habsburgs (Germans) who would need political and financial support from Protestant England to recover his country.

Under this scenario Karságy became a simple footman. This would have allowed him to be near his "Prince" and prompt him about matters Transylvanian without attracting undue attention either to his own presence or his employer's ignorance.

Isaac suffered the least change in his life-style having become the "Prince's" coachman presumably because of his coach-driving work experience—something his noble companions obviously lacked—and his knowledge of England's roads.

The inevitable questions that had to be answered before the inquiry could proceed: why Transylvania as a cover and what was the incentive to make three such disparate people form an association? Even more importantly, why was a Pole masquerading as a refugee Transylvanian prince in England?

Since the trio's collaboration began on a "Transylvanian platform" this Central East European principality and its seventeenth-century political course became a key element in solving the Rochester murder mystery. Far from being a far-away country, Transylvania in the middle of the seventeenth century was still a name to conjure with in staunchly Protestant England. While the rest of Europe was engrossed in 30 years of religious wars, Transylvania's Protestant-dominated Diet offered refuge to France's persecuted Huguenots and other persecuted Protestant minorities like the Polish and Italian Arians. Furthermore, uniquely among the nations of seventeenth-century Europe, it assured

freedom of worship for its four main religious groups—Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Eastern rite Orthodox.

Its realistic assessment of the power politics of the Continent, however, brought it into alliances with Catholic France and Protestant Sweden, not to mention its dependent status from the Ottoman Porta, in its ceaseless quest to weaken the menacing Catholic Habsburgs whose avowed aim at the time was "first to make Hungary and Transylvania Catholic and then German." Catholic France, determined to surround Austria, its then main Continental rival, with hostile nations in order to strangle it, found Protestant Transylvania and the Ottoman Empire its most useful allies. For Transylvania, this alliance offered some room to manoeuvre, while for France it was a useful lever in the attainment of its long-term ambition to wrench the Holy Roman crown from the Germans.

England, totally preoccupied with its own religious strife and civil war after the end of the Thirty Years' War, was nevertheless well aware of the role played by the gallant little Protestant Transylvania, as the contemporary news-sheets reveal. This sympathy, coupled with the gratitude of England's influential Huguenot community towards this East European haven of Huguenot refugees, created a fund of goodwill towards Transylvania.

The Polish nobleman who reached these shores sometimes in 1660 or early 1661, the young Hungarian-Transylvanian squire and Isaac the coachman decided sometime in 1661 to tap this goodwill. Their association, attested by their newly acquired, co-oriented roles, is an incontrovertible fact. Whether their intent was simply to line their pockets or something more sinister is hard to decide after 327 years. The first is a fact documented by the court; the second a strong possibility with the scenarios for both converging at an early point.

The decision to make out the most plausible of the trio as a patriotic refugee Prince determined to fight on to liberate Transylvania from the invading Germans who had "worsted" his army would have been a natural choice for both purposes. Indeed, Charles II of England would have been a soft touch for a request for "sufficient maintenance" from the "Prince of Transylvania" having himself returned a few months earlier from foreign exile.

To judge by the accounts of contemporary reporters, Albert Cassimyer was eminently suited to be the frontman of the "Transylvanian conspiracy." His demeanour, as befitting a Polish nobleman, was undoubtedly impressive enough for a Prince of Transylvania. He was also a peacock of a man and a sharp dresser, for the writer of the London news-sheet on the Rochester murder noted that the "Prince" was dressed for his provincial journey in scarlet breeches and his stockings were laced with gold, with pearl-coloured silk hose under them.

The reason why he took on this role is not too

difficult to ascertain: as a refugee nobleman without funds and without prospects he could either join the band of roving soldiers of fortune in search of a lucrative war or make money some other way. Since there were no "good wars" with plenty of booty in the 1660s, a little confidence trick among the kindly and gullible English would have seemed a fair choice. So Albert Cassimyer Esquire became the "Prince of Transylvania."

Karságy, with his knowledge of Transylvania and the ins and outs of its tribulations in the chilling climate after the defeat of its ruling Prince, George Rákóczi II (who had come to grief while trying to seize the crown of Poland in 1660), would have fitted neatly into this scenario as a useful adviser to the ingenuous Polish impostor. But the possibility that he was the linchpin behind the "Transylvanian conspiracy" can be ruled out. The contemporary court reports stressed his youth, with Vaughan referring to him as "foot-boy" and remarking that "Isaac the Coachman hath taken all [the blame] on himself, being willing to save the Youths life," so he could hardly have had sufficient worldly experience, let alone cunning, to plan such an operation. His weak performance and tearful repetitions of innocence in court would underscore his subservient role in the conspiracy.

Thus while this young Transylvanian nobleman could have helped the "Prince" in spinning tearful tales about the plight of Transylvania, he could not have been the brains behind this clever little stratagem. That dubious honour belongs to the plausible Polish adventurer of princely mien. On the basis of all the available evidence it must be assumed that his chief purpose had been to start a "nice little earner" capitalising on the strong British sympathy for Transylvania. The recorded long journeys the trio had undertaken—"it being usual with him [the Prince] to sleep in the coach when he went on such long journeys"¹⁶—must have formed part of their plan to fleece sympathetic but politically untutored Englishmen in the provinces. For away from London few people would have known the true position of Transylvania after the death of György Rákóczi II in 1660, and the chance of being unmasked as an impostor would have been negligible in small provincial towns. Albert Cassimyer appears to have been doing very nicely as a "Transylvanian Prince" in rural England, to judge by the remarkably big sums of money and costly chattels he had on him when murdered.

There are, however, some pointers which would indicate that the trio, or at least one or two members of it, combined the Transylvanian "fund-raising" trips with a little spying for a foreign power. The first indication is that two of the three had been domiciled in Gravesend, the main sailing place for the packet to France and thus the key communications point for anyone wishing to be in touch with the Continent. While it is not possible to ascer-

tain how the three had met up and decided to launch their "Transylvanian conspiracy," the Gravesend connections of the two would point to the port and regular journeys out of the country.

Another indication that there was more than would meet the eye is the length and direction of the Transylvanian "fund-raising journeys". The long drive along the Medway up to Chatham, the source of England's growing naval power, is a case in point. Karságy told the Lord Chief Justice that they had visited twice the Chatham-Rochester region in the course of a few weeks.¹⁷ Now two such journeys near the naval yards by people concerned solely with tricking gullible people into making donations for Transylvania would seem more than imprudent. There had to be some more compelling reason—like spying on England's capital ships—to make them run the danger of being unmasked as not genuine fund-raisers for Transylvania.

Apart from Holland and France, Spain and Portugal, the main maritime nations, would also have been very interested in England's big ship-building programme. The two lines of inquiry appear to converge at this point. For Isaac Jacomb, alias Jacques, in a surprise move during his hearing at the Old Bailey, introduced one of these foreign powers as his protector¹⁸ to stop his transfer for trial at the Maidstone Assizes: "When the Coachman heard (of the transfer), he pleaded at the Bar, that he had a Letter from his Majesty Alphonso King of Portugal". Unfortunately for him, when asked by the court to produce this protective Portuguese pass, he could not do so and so his fate was sealed. But he certainly would not have tried to invoke Portuguese royal patronage unless he had been providing some important service to Lisbon. As a coachdriver he could have provided information available to those who could travel a lot and visit places others could not without arousing undue suspicion.

On balance, the trio's chief occupation was their Transylvanian confidence trick.

This is borne out both by the contemporary news-sheets and the freshly unearthed trial documents. Unfortunately for them, they became too successful for their own good.

Emboldened by the kind reception and big donations, Albert Cassimyer came to live the part of the Prince of Transylvania. As with each killing his ego became more inflated and his bearing towards his confederates more arrogant, the danger that the "Gravesend syndicate" would fall out among themselves must have become more acute.

But the greed aroused by the generosity of concerned Englishmen must have blinded the Polish impostor. When with princely disdain he refused to share out fairly the proceeds of their "nice little earner" Isaac took the law into his own hands, while Karságy, too much of a nobleman to dirty his hands, looked on. Isaac told the court "That his

intent was not to kill him (Albert), or to do him any harm, onely when he was asleep to take some money from him, which he was in Arrears, knowing that then he had great store, and that he intended to take no more then was due to him”.

So the impostor “Prince of Transylvania” appears to have got his just desserts. But even in death he managed to fool the Dean, Chapter and the good folk of Rochester.

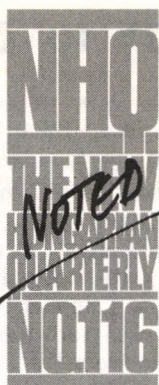
Gabriel Ronay

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PÉTER ESTERHÁZY

What does and what doesn't change

... The reason why literature in Hungary is highly appreciated is not that literature here is better than elsewhere, or its readers are more impressionable and more resolute, but that they are and have been more dependent on one another. Facts and dreams had a zone which the public, publicism and the public mind could not penetrate, partly because they were banned from this zone, partly because they were frightened and became scared, and even grew tired, while literature, by applying some make-up, could bring word from there. This masking—produced by complicated teamwork involving society, intellect, influence and individuals—had a great price resistance and opportunism simultaneously, compromises, survival and some idiocy, an appraisal (in the best possible case) of the degree of destruction in progress... (Now it seems rather that for the past 40 years all and sundry have been oppressed by those 10 million true-born Kuruts, as their adversaries have disappeared without leaving a trace...)

Now all this will be otherwise. It is over, literature will find a different, less significant, less privileged position (it has already taken it, but awareness of this still takes a little time). In fact, there is nothing wrong with this, it is as it should be, because it is true but does not make us too happy if we glance at the cultured West, where all this has already been accomplished.

What is taking place here is maybe a peaceful revolution; yet it is true of here as well that in times of war the Muses are silent. An excited, impatient society does not like unreasonable things. Still, literature is such, it is without reason. An impatient society is seeking useful things. In literature, too, it wants to find what is useful. And then, seek and you shall find. But literature itself cannot squint at that. Literature has no object. Literature is not such as it appears on television. Namely that it is in colour and has a little wide screen, that it soothes and elevates. Such is central heating and winning the jackpot on the lottery: they soothe and elevate.

Literature continues to venture into zones which others do not enter, this (if it is noticed) is in principle its justification, its defiance of existence, its sincerity and implacability; but these days the boundaries of this zone are not guarded by cultural police and do not change according to who is in power or where Russian soldiers are quartered (*n. b.*: they shall get out).

The reader appreciated mainly the writer's independence, loved and respected his own lost freedom in that of the author. From now on he will be compelled to rest satisfied with the book, the text, the words. Important and bad writing will be no more, it will simply be bad writing only and sentences and works which have been kept alive only by the embargo put on them will pass away. May they rest in peace. But, I repeat, a genuine literary work, even though a masterwork, is—like a living being—inexhaustible. And free.

(*Hitel*, 1989., No. 13.)

Here nobody loved anybody

... "In my case a new judgement will be rendered by the international working-class movement," said Imre Nagy in his last plea. In his person was killed one of the 1945 distributors of land, in Maléter's it was a 1944 partisan ("a Horthy officer who had always broken his oath," János Kádár said of him in parliament in May 1957), in Gimes's it was a communist intellectual of Jewish extraction. But there were others too who were not granted mercy. József Dudás, a well-known participant in the anti-Nazi rising, was among the first to be hanged; István Bibó, the country's greatest political thinker at the time, narrowly escaped with life imprisonment. And the others, the "less well known ones"...

A historical problem: How much was János Kádár forced into bearing all this? I'm afraid he was not forced, from about January 1957 he could have resigned. My problem is that the Hungarian people have forgotten all this and have not liked being reminded of it. But the same Hungarian people could not forgive János Kádár a few bad economic decisions he made or allowed to be carried out towards the end of his career. Now everybody is out to throw light upon his bloody past.

Rákosi was a crueller governor but he courted the Hungarian people. Imre Nagy loved the Hungarian people. János Kádár despised the Hungarian people. In his last public speech, delivered at the Láng Machine Works in May 1987, he said: Now you will earn somewhat less and again somewhat more later. Was he right? I'm afraid he was. But he himself helped to mould this type of man (...) and with a sort of mediocre talent he hit the centre of the mark of primitive Hungarian conformism and paternalism.

People? Yes, it's a pity we have to write this word down. Wasn't it enough for us to have been a fascist people? Have we been also a Kádárite people? Between 1939 and 1944 we certainly had a middle class which bore serious responsibility for conveying fascist ideals to the people; after 1959 as well we had a middle class which conveyed a Kádárite absence of ideals to the people.

The situation—although Brezhnevism cannot be compared to Hitlerism in all its viciousness—had certain analogies to show: one could affirm with good reason that Hungarian authoritarianism was nevertheless better than the surrounding dictatorships. [...]

Kádárism had no ideology. Not only was it not socialist, but it did not even suppose itself to be so. That it "professed" to be so is another matter: we now have to pay for it. If one asked a cynical, conformist Hungarian intellectual why in fact authoritarian rule in Hungary was better than a bourgeois democracy, he produced various obscurities to the effect that in the West there was no public security but there was prostitution and money-grubbing, there was no genuine freedom or that there was too much freedom for that matter.

This middle class—in the good old Horthy manner—did not love the peasants driven into "cooperatives" whom it described as rolling in riches, and did not love the hairsplitting oppositionist intellectuals—it did not love the people; nor did the people love themselves. "Love thy neighbour as thyself"—but here nobody loved anybody—and a father was needed to curb general enmity. That class was more overtly reactionary than Rákosi's abortive Byzantine governorship which Hungarian society could never accept.

Amidst the hysteria of today it is proper to deny the results as well. At the same time it is no use exaggerating the degree of "repression" of the 1980s: those were powerless counterblows. The opposition's activity contributed to hatching that bloodless revolution in which we have been living for two years now. This bloodless but temporarily merely political revolution was carved out for us by the social revolution of the Polish working-class and by the reform movement of a Joseph II of Moscow. The results are fantastic and there is no harm in stressing over against the hysterics: not for many years now have our basic freedoms been as extensive as they are today. But in Hungary no social revolution has taken place so far, and this may become a cause of a new counter-revolution (certainly painted white this once) and paternalism. The symptoms are already alarming; on the one hand the denial of all socialist values (in

a country where these have never been effective); on the other hand the revival of a muddled mythology of the "national awakening" of the late 18th century. For the failure of our past revolutions, we could refer to unfavourable outside factors, in the event of a failure of our current revolution we shall have only ourselves to blame. On the 16th of June let us impress on our minds what judgment history may pass on us if we forfeit our chances . . .

Pál Szalai

(*Világ*, 15 June 1989)

Hungarian schizophrenia

Part of an Interview with Ágnes Heller

The ravages of war, material damage can be repaired, but the moral havoc suffered by society in the past few decades has caused greater damage than anything else. I have in mind especially the injuries to a sense of identity and human dignity . . .

—Since 1919 the moral bearing of the people of Hungary has suffered damage, I might say, continuously. Every system established since then exerted itself only to destroy the ethics of this country. Well, 1956 did something to restore this moral identity. People felt that, as citizens, they could do something and this was a contribution to the return of human dignity into the human community in which it had not been present for so long a time. This is, of course, not easy to amend, but it can be amended. There are very difficult problems. It is curious enough, but it was easier to remedy the fanatic blind belief which was typical of some, for example, during the Rákosi era. If you believe in something fanatically and then find that what you have believed in is a lie, then everything disappears together with your belief. But one thing remains, you will do what you believe in. This happened to the communist leadership of 1948—from Imre Nagy down to others who are still alive and were not in the leadership of that time, like Miklós Vásárhelyi or Péter Kende. They believed in something and did it honestly. They found it had been wickedness or dishonesty. From that time on they believed in something else and did it honestly. This is a very simple formula.

The picture becomes complicated when people refuse to believe in something but pretend to believe in it. For long years they don't give a fig for anything but they act as if they believed in it. They do not believe in the value of words, but they always use those words and ultimately do not even know what they actually believe in. Nor do they know yet what they think of this or that. They do not know their own opinion! This is the most terrible moral destruction that people can suffer. And here is the problem of identity, which is most serious not where we believe in false gods. Except if we believe in false gods also when we can already see that the gods are lying. This leads to schizophrenia, to the development of split personalities and cynicism, which is the breeding-ground of dishonesty.

We are talking, we use words and know the words are lying. Then we get so accustomed to these lying words that we become entwined with them. And if someone else speaks out against these words, then you defend the words which you know to be lies, since you can no longer speak any other language. You forget that you can use your own head for thinking. In my view the greatest destruction has been wrought in the field of politics but there are other fields too.

Is this language like the Orwellian "newspeak," and the world itself also like a phalanstery where man's private life and men's thoughts are under control?

—Yes, this is called totalitarianism. Something happened here in the Kádár era so that political language was dominated by

complete Orwellism. A bit of freedom existed in private life, in the intimate sphere: the use of this Orwellian speech was not obligatory in the family. I don't think that people spoke the same language at home as in their office. Of course, this led to a different problem. Surely this is also schizophrenia. For, if in speaking to your spouse you use a language different to that you use in your office and the two languages have nothing in common, then you live against your values in one world and according to your values in the other.

Are the younger generations entering social life inheriting this schizophrenia?

—Here the schizophrenia has a peculiar form. To revert to the Kádár era once more: that era brought on much destruction. I am sorry to say that it did more harm than the Rákosi era, in which there were very violent conflicts but these only lasted a short time. In the Kádár era people could be scoundrels with good conscience. After 1961 they could feel they had not killed anybody, so their conscience could be clean.

They were free to make money, they were free to use their elbow in their bourgeois way, they were free to think: tomorrow I shall get a refrigerator, the day after tomorrow I shall buy a car and go on a trip. These possibilities opened up, thus two kinds of morality linked up, but neither was of any quality. The fact in itself that I want to acquire more is not yet morally contemptible. It is a natural human demand to want to satisfy my needs. If I want to have a better car, a better refrigerator, this is not humanly contemptible, there is nothing more natural than that. The immorality of the acquisition of property was then criticised by many, and its defenders always said that ethnic groups had after all never been exterminated for the sake of a larger car, and they were right. But if the two are combined: that is, if you always want to acquire more and more, so the price you must pay is that you keep your mouth shut in politics. This combination creates a morally very awkward situation because you have got two values; one is that you want to have more money and the other is that you must be left out of politics. Nothing else. And you don't mind what will be the fate of your nation, its future.

We are inclined to think in terms of models. Many are urging the Finlandisation of Hungary, and some economists consider the Swedish model worth following. Do you find this realistic?

—These are two different questions. Because Finlandisation is a matter of politics, while the Swedish model is an economic and social matter. Finlandisation means simple neutrality on the understanding that the country remains within the Russian sphere of influence. I think this is realistic since Hungary is situated near the Soviet Union which has interests in having no hostile states on its borders. The Hungarian people—in so far as they can freely decide and are not of a colonial status—may also be interested in maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union. Why not stand in good relations as state to state? Nor must we be a member of any military alliance either. Finlandisation, I think, is both a good thing and a very simple matter.

The Swedish model, on the other hand, is more complicated. It depends on a society's own traditions. The Swedes themselves also say that: We like this model very much, but it has evolved in Sweden under very particular historical circumstances. In a revolutionary situation the well-to-do section of society (the bourgeoisie and the state bureaucracy) decided that affairs should move rather towards a welfare society. This welfare society was established as an historical process in three or four stages. But such a process cannot be imitated. This is no simple matter. I believe it is impossible to create a society where we pull out all protective nets from under people, throw them into the deep end and say, now everybody swim! Whether you are intelligent or stupid, lucky or unlucky, single or with a family, educated or uneducated, you shall swim! The goal is there, just go for it! To my mind this is crazy. For without a protective net one cannot build a society worth living in. One cannot come forward with an economic programme which engenders excessive unemployment. But people must be told so! (...)

László R. Stark

(Magyar Hírlap, August 1989)

“Tattooed Stalin”

In *Tattooed Stalin*, Ákos Kovács and Erzsébet Sztrés published a collection of tattoos and political caricatures by Soviet convicts, originally collected by Danzig Sergeievits Baldaev, a Burjat retired police officer, which has not yet been published in the Soviet Union. The Hungarian editors wrote a preface and added an interview with Baldaev, as well as an epilogue by Ákos Szilágyi. The legend of Caricature No. 48 on page 154, reads:

“ATTENTION, PERSONALITY CULT!!! In 1938–39, Beria, the Minister of the Interior, issued an order to reduce the number of convicts. This, however, meant not the release of the innocent, but the annihilation of invalids and convicts whose medical check-up found them to be suffering from muscular dystrophy caused by forced labour and imperfect nutrition.

In the Kolima camps, the sick and the invalid were taken to the baths and then, under the pretext that they would be given underwear, the naked and steaming convicts were dragged, through another door, into the bitter cold of 50 degrees centigrade below zero, onto tractor-drawn sledges, and carried to frozen swamps, where the dead bodies were pulled down using steel hooks. This is how they reduced the number of convicts by several thousand . . .”

In the drawing, trusties in black pull the frozen bodies down from the sledges, prizing them apart with hooks. A fur-coated guard in the foreground trains his sub-machine-gun on the trusties.

It is a familiar picture, one only has to substitute hairy devils for the figures in black. In medieval frescoes one usually sees blazing flames, since punishment takes the form of insufferable heat, but as we know from reading Dante, the depths of hell are permafrost. This association of ideas offers a traditional, theological explanation. (I once read a Capuchin brochure in Venice, in which the existence of the devil was supported by claiming that in the 20th century alone there lived two people who could be proved to be the devil incarnate: Hitler and Stalin. Since then other names can be added.)

Ákos Szilágyi at the end of the volume provides a historical and sociological explanation. The late medieval guild of thieves, an organized underworld of criminals known as the *blatnog mir*, has survived in Russia. One of their basic rules is a thorough contempt for private property. Therefore, people with possessions were not considered humans and, if need be, were killed without hesitation. According to another basic rule, to get in touch with any agent or authority of normal society, for them the society of non-humans, was a capital offense leading to immediate retribution for any member of the *blatnog mir*.

After the revolution of October 1917, the Bolsheviks considered criminals disclaiming private ownership to be their “class relatives.” They tried to enlist them in the building of a new society. They succeeded in doing so, even though in a manner different from that envisaged by romantic Bolsheviks. What happened was that in the GULAG the criminal convicts were entrusted with the torture, and if need be, the liquidation of millions of political, that is innocent, convicts. After the German attack, Stalin even enlisted them in the army. This, however, led to disruption within the underworld, as the true-blue criminals could not forgive those of their mates who established contact with the state and thus betrayed the thieves’ honour. After the war two camps fought to the death and the survivors were then unhesitatingly clapped into solitary confinement by Stalin, to wipe them out, or turned loose on the civilian population by Beria.

Then came the Brezhnev era, which gave rise to a mafia-type crime, with links with the authorities, and later still, the germs of the modern Western-type metropolitan underworld have also struck root. As the 19th century Hungarian historical novelist Mór Jókai wrote in his *A jövő század regénye* (Novel of the Coming Century), “And at the point where naught ceases and something begins, robber chiefs turn into police chiefs, communists into usurers, wandering Gypsies into bank managers, freemasons into prelates, soap-box orators into ministers—and the president of the red republic into an emperor.”



10. Map of the Soviet Union covered over by barbed wire. Symbol of the prison management. Usually tattooed on the back or the belly. 11. Marx's head with devil's horns, on Das Kapital, Legend: "The bestial face of capitalism." Usually tattooed on the back or the belly. 12. Lenin portrait. "Leader of the October revolution." Usually tattooed on the chest. 13. Caption: "Homo hominis lupus!" 14. Caption: „Wolf is a brother and friend to wolf.“ 15. Hitler's portrait. "The Jewish Godfather" or "Adolf Stretcher." 16. Portrait of Tsar Nicholas II. "Beat the Jew, save Russia!" 17. Stalin portrait. "Boss of the Socialist Camp". 18. Israeli flag. 19. Stars and Stripes. 20. Arms of Tsarist Russia. 21. Union Jack. 22. Swedish flag. 23. Skeleton. Collective farmer after having delivered his taxes: 1. I've delivered my flesh. 2. I've delivered my skin. 3. I've delivered my hair. 4. I've delivered my balls. Only my bones have remained for reprocessing. The human skeleton also had another, ironic meaning: American collective farmer, "The road to Communism", voluntary member of the kolkhoz. 24. Star of David including the five-pointed star, etc. "Marx star". 25. Man pushing a barrow loaded with stones "Negro captive at Kolima." "Shoot, Commandant, I cannot stand it any longer!"

ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫЕ

УВАЖАЙ ВЛАСТЬ СИЛЫ...



24. Лев, топор, меч, щит, колчан со стрелами, булава, лук, знамена, книга, лавровый ветвь - уважай власть силы и разума. Левая сторона груди.

РЕБЕНОК ПОРОКА И ЗЛОЙ СУДЬБЫ...



25. РЕБЕНОК С КРЫЛЬЯМИ, ЗМЕЯ, ПРОБИТОЕ СЕРДЦЕ СТРЕЛОЙ, ЯБЛОКО, ОЛЧУН НА ПРИЯЗНИ, ЛУК И КОЛЧАН "ЗЛО НА СВОЮ СУДЬБУ", НИЧЕГО НЕ ЗАБЫДЕШ, НИКОМУ НЕ ПРОЩУ - НАНОСИТСЯ НА ГРУДИ, СПИНЕ И ЖИВОТЕ.



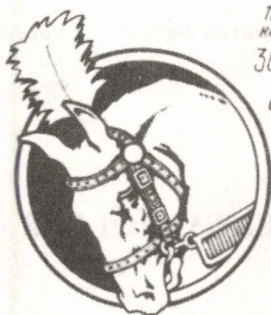
26. ДЬЯВОЛ И ЖЕНЩИНА НА ПРЕСТУПЛЕНИЕ ТОЛКНУЛА ЖЕНЩИНА, ОБИДЧУ ЗАКОН ПРЕДПЛЕЧЬЕ, БЕДРО.



27. ПРотивоборствующие быки - татуировка обозначает борьбу за лидерство среди уголовников. Намерен постоять за себя и за свое место под Солнцем. Отрицательное настроение против МВД, прокуратуры, суда. Наносится на лопатки (спины).



28. ПОРТРЕТ ПАМЯТИ О ЖЕНЩИНЕ НАНОСИТСЯ НА ПЛЕЧЕ.



29. ПАМЯТЬ О РАБОТЕ В ЦИРКЕ. ПЛЕЧЕ.

ТАТУИРОВКИ О ПАМЯТИ СЛУЖБЫ В ВОЙСКАХ НКВД, МВД НАНОСИТСЯ НА ПЛЕЧЕ.

30



31



24. "Respect the authority of power." Lion, hatchet, dagger, bow, mace, flag, book, laurel branch. (Tattooed on the left of the chest.) 25. "Child of ill fate and sin." Winged child with a serpent, a heart transfixed with an arrow, apple, doves. It stands for: I forget nothing, I forgive nobody. (Tattooed on the chest, the stomach or the back.) 26. Devil and woman. Applied if crime is committed for a woman. It may also mean: I dodge the law. (Tattooed on the forearm or the hip.) 27. Bulls fighting each other, meaning the struggle fought for dominance among the criminals. He is able to stand his ground. He is at odds with the MVD (Ministry of the Interior) and the prosecution. (Tattooed on the back.) 28. Woman's face. In memory of a woman. (Tattooed on the shoulder.) 29. Horse's head. In memory of having worked for a circus. (Tattooed on the shoulder.) 30. The person has served with the armed forces of the NKVD and the MVD. 31. The person has served with the armed forces of the NKVD and the MVD.

The Buriat collector Baldaev was trained to become a painter, but after the war he joined the police, and he retired as a police major. As a trained painter, and himself the son of a political convict who had fortunately survived, he collected the tattooed designs on convicts, and later their political caricatures as well. Ákos Kovács and Erzsébet Sztrés have now turned part of his gargantuan private archives into public property. They have translated the captions in the original Russian drawings, and added a glossary with a selection of the incredibly rich Russian slang. Kovács has long been engaged in exploring the objects and art of popular culture. He has mounted a memorable exhibition of tattoos in Hungary, with a catalogue to go with it. He became acquainted with Baldaev's research in the course of field work, and now, by shedding light on a segment of the Soviet background, that has proved so fatal for Hungarians, he has created a vocabulary of symbols and an index of motifs of Hell. The material in the volume was first published in this Hungarian edition. The tattoos themselves serve as insignia of the criminal fraternity, or rather as a coded prison history of the captives, helping them to identify each other. But also, and this is the important point, in the present context, they are distortions of symbols of the outside world, which from their *blatnog* point of view is a non-human world. The church is turned into prison, a naked woman writhes on the cross, and the male of a love-making couple most often is the devil (with clearly recognizable Hebrew features; the Russian anti-world is strongly anti-Semitic.)

But there are sentimental symbols as well: the mother, dove, child, bleeding heart, sailing boat. Hell can also be emotional. And the tattooings of the portraits of Lenin or Stalin also serve as a sort of talisman, a protection against being shot.

There was a time when I found real pleasure in going to exhibitions of Soviet art. I had a special liking for Lenin prizewinner Kazakh milkmaids busy in the setting sun. God only knows why, I gained my first authentic information about the position on the Kazakh milk front from the joke on Comrade Brezhnev. As I learned, Kazakh women had been complaining to him that there was no milk! He answered: "But I have sent you two hundred cows!" "Yes, Comrade Brezhnev. Only you sent them 200 kilometres up north, where there's nobody to milk them, and they were eaten by the wolves."

László Szörényi

Ákos Kovács and Erzsébet Sztrés: *Tetovált Sztálin* (Tattooed Stalin) Szeged, 1989. 250 pp.

HERTA MÜLLER

Sometimes I have to bite my finger

Writing in German in Rumania is dying out. The authors are either chased out of the country or into death. Herta Müller, born in 1953 in Nitzkydorf in the Rumanian Banat, is probably the best known writer from this region. She now lives in West Germany and here writes about Roland Kirsch, a young author who has so far only been published in an anthology in Rumania and who, as became known recently, was found dead in mysterious circumstances in his native region.

How can one tell others who someone was whom they did not know, when one has to keep on saying "was" and not "is".

Roland Kirsch was born in Detta, a small town in the Rumanian Banat, on October 14th 1960.

He wrote *texts*, not many. He photographed with an irritated, thoughtful eye for the margin of things.

A few years ago he completed his studies at a College of Building. He was employed as an engineer by a Pigfattening Agrobusiness Unit near the city of Temeswar.

I have heard it said that workers while slaughtering drank the warm blood of the beasts and that nights steaming hams of pork were smuggled across the fence. But not from him.

He said little when friends sat together.

You could have overlooked him if he had not much too often stubbed out a half smoked cigarette, if he had not spoken a sentence from time to time. That sentence was always quiet and precise. He moved all of his face as he spoke, and the sentence was never about himself.

A time came when the friends left the country, each taking his turn. Life was made up of taking leave.

The state of the country was more hopeless than ever before.

"Sometimes I have to bite my finger to notice that I still exist." This sentence is there on the last card which reached me. That sentence was about him.

On May 2nd 1989 he was found hanged in his small flat, on the fourth floor of a grey tenement in Temeswar. Suicide?

As so often, all that argues in favour argues against.

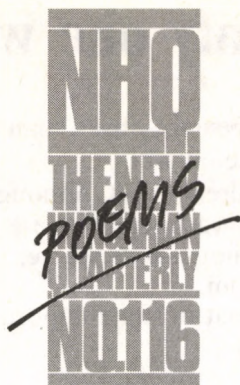
As so often and nevertheless only in some cases the state authorities did not carry out a *post mortem*.

Quickly and inconspicuously, perhaps conspicuously quietly, Roland Kirsch was buried in Rumania.

If the Ceaușescu regime had a conscience this would be a graveyard. The regime has no conscience but many graveyards, many people who are graveyards.

(*Die Zeit*, Hamburg, 11th August 1989)





ALADÁR LÁSZLÓFFY

Impossible

It's impossible that the selfsame mood of cities
exists in everyone. Otherwise, in those cities
where I'm restless, where I'm sad, no other could
live either, no other would live willingly.
Otherwise, there wouldn't be cities, just one
city, otherwise, there wouldn't be rooms, just
one room, otherwise, there wouldn't be families,
just one family, otherwise, there wouldn't be
loves, just one love. Otherwise, there wouldn't
be so many, just one single me. It's impossible
for that which is in everyone, to be in everyone.
It's impossible to live for long in a world which
is not understood. I became attached to all this,
like memories, like my life, yet a great work of
art still moves in me, the fearful one. This work
of art walks, walks in the city, so beware, you
whom it will speak out against. I've seen the world
but, even today, I go on watching.

The only one writing

The thrown-down pencil spins: a man left
alone with the white-on-white.
You know, we've already met, although
according to you it was merely love.
We lived for some hours somewhere,
in the cube of a room,
not in the middle, but in some important place,
like the heart:
on a bed.
I've at least two heads, one
already sleeping with your face, talking throughout,
the other searching for its place in the sky, in your lap,
and keeps quiet, look: it sees with words, watches
as if having known us before our human life.
The closer I lean the more you are like,
a naked girl-land from a bird's-eye-view,
like some reclining peninsula,
that I can always look down upon, such
an essential landscape, where I simultaneously
feel north, south, its hills and red-spot towns.
I don't really know how this fragile darkness
can shine so, how the rain of my fingers can
still see clearly enough to wander all over you —
which epoch are you,
and which nation flames in me
for its traditions?
I don't caress you, I just say farewell, like
the Italian poets to the land of Campania, aged.
You white, you, projected here.
You piece of moonlight. You, writing,
whom I have read alone
forever.

Házsongárd cemetery, No. 2655

(fragments)

(UP THE HILL)

Coming, bringing out my walking sickness, life, I've
two cornflowers with me, like patient, pure butterflies,
they follow me. Apparently, for them it is not a cemetery,
nor good, nor bad, horror, homeland, yard, garden, mothertombs, just
land: land, the land of life-sweet freedom.

(SOMEONE)

Someone's walking up and down between the graves, as if
searching for, quietly looking at, reading, getting
acquainted with, thinking this and that, and his afternoon
passes within the afternoon, his year passes within the
year, and his life passes within the great lifelessness, too.
Someone's walking between the rows, as if searching for.

(REMEMBRANCE)

There is no cemetery that's been lived in forever. Ask,
where have they gone who lived in this town five-hundred
years ago — where? To the cemetery. And those who slept in
this cemetery five-hundred years ago, where have they gone?
To death. And where have they gone to from death?

(SILENCE)

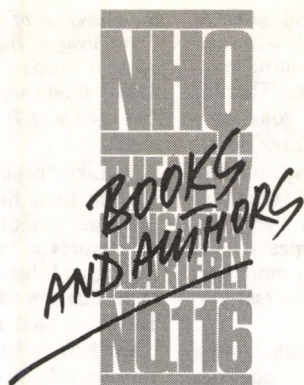
It is unlike any other cemetery in the world. From above
the black sepulchre a branch pokes out its wing, as if
an eagle had landed upon the tombstones. Faces can be seen,
figures, within, beyond the bushes, a braided, gilded body
stands in the dark, clutching a book or sword, not moving,
not walking, even at midnight no one walks, just as if
with bowed heads in a great, long, and for us solely grief-
given discipline, everyone were just standing here awake,
just standing over this so tragic history of the world,
in the world's unresurrectable life.

Vivat Academia

Someone, tortured Galileo,
dreams this army.
... A thousand steps rumble,
as students flood from the
floors of each academy,
the library clouded with dust,
statues trembling where they stand,
the archway collapses,
the fountain in dust to the neck,
and they carry off knowledge, like
besiegers holding death within,
whilst brandishing torches,
and swords and spears,
the endless flow already in the
squares outside, they surge
through the world's invisible streets.
The tame knights of knowledge together.
Someone tortured, abused
Galileo, dreams this army.
In reality, they sit one by one by
flickering lamps and occasionally
adjust their spectacles. And
they are peacefully powerful.

Translated by Gerard Gorman

Aladár Lászlóffy, a Transylvanian poet, won the 1988 Robert Graves Prize for Best Poem of the Year. *Házsongárd Cemetery in Cluj (Kolozsvár)*, a historic Hungarian graveyard, is gradually being turned into a Rumanian one.



The Tragedy of Madách

The Tragedy of Man, by Imre Madách

Translated from the Hungarian by George Szirtes.

Introduction by George Cushing. Illustrations by Mihály Zichy.

Budapest: Corvina Press; New York: Püski Publishing, 1988. 272 pp.

Born in the Hungarian village of Alsósztrégova (now in Czechoslovakia), Imre Madách (1823—1864) is known almost exclusively as author of the dramatic poem which George Szirtes has brilliantly translated here. He did of course write other things, but even the better known of these—for example *Moses*, 1861—have failed to get a hearing beyond the frontiers of his native country. This is at least the sixth attempt to win for Madách a place in world literature by means of incorporating *The Tragedy of Man* into one of the 'major languages'—English. Szirtes comes to the task with certain enviable personal advantages, and the moment of his arrival is also auspicious. He is of course both Hungarian by birth and an English-speaker by upbringing, a combination which no previous translator of Madách possessed with such fluency. Finally, Szirtes is a gifted poet in English whose most recent volume, *Metro* (1988), demonstrates the quiet intensity of his engagement with Hungarian history. Perhaps it is only in this post-'56 generation that such a doubly qualified translator of a Hungarian classic could emerge, and the current sense of unprecedented openness in Central European cultural relations provides a suitably large platform on which to perform the latest act of recuperation on Madách's behalf. Together with the translator, the sponsors of this project—whether in Corvina Press, the Hungarian PEN Club, or wherever—deserve the warmest congratulations.

For all its classic status, *The Tragedy of Man* sits uneasily in any nationalist version of the Hungarian tradition. Its vision is universalist, even cosmological. Its immediate location in Hungarian

history after the calamity of the 1848—49 War of Independence can be exaggerated as far as *literary* significance is concerned, for its pessimism is not simply an expression of post-war exhaustion and despair. With its succession of tableaux ranging from the Creation through the ancient civilisations to the French Revolution and beyond, the poem grimly inscribes a history which had earlier inspired the Enlightenment philosophers of Europe generally. Adam as Pharaoh, Adam as Danton, the series poses the most intriguing challenge to poet, translator and reader in turn. Madách, in essence, is a post-Enlightenment figure and a most powerfully late one, faithful to, but unconvinced by, the idea of progress and ultimate harmony.

This distinctive blend of reservation and commitment apart, Goethe and Blake are recognisable precursors, with Milton, Marlowe, the vernacular Bibles, and a western tradition of morality drama behind them. Precursors, however, are not parents whom one resembles. In the modern age, both Goethe and Blake were also prolific writers in a language already acknowledged in Europe as possessing a high literary dignity. It is one of the insufficiently interrogated ironies of romantic nationalism that those languages which carried the rich *burthen* of the new literature (especially English, French, and German) were also the languages of nation-states, actually or imminently committed to the suppression of romantic nationalism. This process became even more marked after 1848, as France moved towards north Africa, as Germany industrialised, and as English spread its red blush round the globe like a boxer's sponge. In such

conditions, Madách was all too easily relegated to the outer porch, where Cassandra and other depressing witnesses to the actual condition of mankind raised their incomprehensible voices. That his should not even be an Indo-European voice only adds to the neglect he has suffered. *Moses* disappears into the lists of biblical epics ranging (in opera alone) from Handel to Schoenberg, while the humanist thrust of *The Tragedy of Man* has been neglected perhaps on the grounds that it repeats—and none too optimistically—a universalism more universally available in such splendidly universal languages as German and English.

Consequently, efforts to 'place' Madách often choose out-of-the-way locations. Ira B. Nadel has recently struggled to link him to James Joyce, because *Moses* was allegorically an account of the Hungarian struggle for national independence, a topic of interest to the creator of Leopold Bloom. (Yes, but surely Verdi's *Nabucco* was closer to Joyce.) Lóránt Czigány has drawn attention to a verbal detail of C. P. Sanger's 1933 translation of *The Tragedy* echoed in *Perelandra*, a novel of 1943 by C. S. Lewis. More substantially, one might look at the galactic voyages of Olaf Stapledon (1886–1950)—for example, *Last and First Man* (1930)—for a degree of stoicism and comprehensive pessimism comparable to Madách's. Stapledon's epic opens with a chapter called 'Balkan Europe' and circles round an economic crisis of the future when Russian industrial organisation had proved impossible with American capital. In the preface, Stapledon wrote that: "We must achieve neither mere history, nor mere fiction, but myth. A true myth is one which, within the universe of a certain culture (living or dead), expresses richly, and *often perhaps tragically*, the highest admirations possible within that culture". (Emphasis added.) In the preface to the sequel, he described it "as a work of fiction, (but) it does not pretend to be a novel. It has no hero but Man". Here, perhaps are matters for the latter-day readers of *The Tragedy of Man*.

Certainly, readers of this new edition of the poem will find more than enough to satisfy eye and ear, in the marvellously reproduced charcoal drawings by Zichy which were first exhibited in 1886, as well as in Szirtes's unfussy yet confident rendering of the speeches of Adam, Lucifer and the others. But if, on reflection, they want to pursue the issue of placing the author and his work, then a little controversy raging in some of the universities of America and France may provide some additional conceptual tools for the task in hand. Basically, the debate began with a study of Franz Kafka published in Paris in 1974, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In the spring of 1983 the *Mississippi Review* carried an English translation of the second chapter, under the title "What is a Minor Literature?", and this in turn was followed by Louis Renza's 'A White Heron' and

the Question of Minor Literature (Madison, 1984). From Prague via Paris to America, the topic returned to Europe in David Lloyd's *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley, 1987).

Like "negative" in Hegelian philosophy, "minor" in these debates is to be approved. A *major* literature is not necessarily a greater literature; *major* denotes a literature which possesses a stable canon, and this canon in turn generates symbols of reconciliation which can be read at another level as The State itself. And at the heart of all major literatures there is the bourgeois, individual subject, universally validated and virtually archetypal of humanity. But cultural nationalism has a habit of reproducing the basic forms and structures of the intrusions it officially resists; whereas a minor literature, in this argument, resists these fundamentally political pressures (in the name, to be sure, of a different politics) and resists often by means of travesty, parody, misquotation, translation. Major literatures favour the novel for obvious reasons, minor literatures don't.

Now 'minority literary theory', as Lloyd calls it, sets itself against the overweening predominance of the English and the French literary traditions—at least in theory it does, in practice it tends to seek tenure in universities built on land stolen from the Apaches—and endorses much of the Third World cultural resistance to the old imperial powers. However, as Kafka wrote in German and not Czech (or Hebrew), and as Mangan wrote in English (not Gaelic), the examples taken up so far do not confront the issue of language-difference. The imperial languages rule O.K. even in the radical seminars, and Swedish or even Spanish is no more likely to contribute to the general configuration of language, than Xhosa or Magyar. This can produce exquisitely ironic possibilities and anti-possibilities of theoretical comment.

In the fourth scene of *The Tragedy of Man*, a restless Adam/Pharaoh is confronted by the wife (Eve) of a dying slave; struck by her beauty as the perfect complement of his power, he abandons his building programme and adopts her as his spouse. And Szirtes renders this well enough to provoke the ire of any Lacanian/Kristevan feminist who might pick up his English translation:

Eve

Perhaps, O Pharaoh, I already bore you
With needless, incoherent chattering.
I cannot help it if I am no wiser.

Adam

Do not even wish to be, my dearest.
One intellect is quite enough for me.
It's not for power or majesty I seek
Your breast, nor knowledge. Books can grant me
these . . .

(To Lucifer)

But something bothers me and breaks the spell
of sensuous reverie. It may be foolish
And yet, I beg you, satisfy this longing —
Let me cast just one intrepid glance
Into the future . . .

In the original, no grammatical gender exists, of course, and thus the currently fashionable debate on the relation between gender and sexuality has to be rewritten to take into account so unusual a language as Hungarian. This exercise could only have beneficial effects on the debate which has been principally predicted (as they say) on the French definite articles. But Adam's discontinuous and sustained reappearance (as Miltiades, as Tancred, as Kepler, as a suitably nameless Englishman during the expansive phase of capitalism) throughout *The Tragedy of Man* also enacts a reversal of that trend towards the integrated, self-sufficient, bourgeois, individual subject encapsulated within a securely defined identity and celebrated in the canonically central *Bildungsroman*. The poem, in this perspective, is ripe for incorporation into 'minority literary theory'; and the relative unimportance of the novel in nineteenth-century Hungarian literature would facilitate the operation. But Madách's Adam also has his continuity; it is precisely a bourgeois one in that it is driven by ethics and intellectualism, each regarded as the agent or vehicle of the other. Madách's Adam is also a kind of secularist example of metempsychosis.

More broadly, Hungary in the days of Madách might provide exactly the convergence of elements which could enliven the somewhat provincial discussions of the Anglo-French theoreticians. Crucial among these elements would be—a highly distinctive language, relations, both absorptive and devolved, with an imperial power, a central European location, imminent capitalist development, religious diversity, etc. etc. Madách's place in Hungarian literary history could itself become the focus of a renewed investigation of the way in which the canon of that history has been established, even with the inclusion of a work so evidently neglectful of national concerns.

A comparison with the Irish poet, James Clarence Mangan (1803–1849), might well prove very revealing, and it is to be hoped that some Hungarian critic, like Ferenc Takács, might be persuaded to write on the topic when he has concluded his work of József Eötvös's Irish writings. Mangan's work was written during a period of heightened national self-consciousness, and the divergence (not to say self-sabotage) of his poetry in relation to romantic nationalism proceeds hand in glove with the strategic placing of veritable billboards of melancholic expression. Eötvös (1813–

1871) and Madách were near-contemporaries, and the contrast of their political careers as well as of their writings might in turn illuminate areas of mid-century Irish culture, for which the old practice of national literary history is no more revealing than the flashier theories of the minority men have been to date.

As G. F. Cushing points out in the introduction to the book under review, Madách's grandfather reconverted to Catholicism with the result that both Lutheran and Catholic churches in Alsósztrégova contain memorials to the family. Such details, often scorned as empiricist chaff by the theoreticians, provide one line of communication with the sectarian divisions of other 'minor' regions of Europe, Ireland not excluded. Add to this the work of Hungarian historians like Iván T. Berend and György Ránki in *The European Periphery and Industrialization 1780–1914*, and one has a measure of the possibilities for a comparative study in which Madách can be truly central. The minor literary theoreticians should not be taken as infallible, of course, for they'd have a hard time accommodating nineteenth-century Russian fiction, and the belief of some of them that Ireland was the first European state to escape from under an external bondage shows scant knowledge of Norwegian and Italian history, to go no further.

Some of this may bring a little joy to George Szirtes who, in his translator's note, appears to adopt the modest outlook of English literary life. He does not presume to be a scholar, he says, and follows this up with a splendid near-parody of the empirical Englishman settling for the smells, the sunlight in the garden and so on which he finds at the site of this great literary monument. It is a long time since English readers (Szirtes continues) have looked at Byron for example, and they are constitutionally averse to rhetoric, passion, and argument. Yet the translator manages to conclude that "one might stretch a point and claim that the argument is the drama" of Madách's nineteenth-century poem, an argument poised on the threshold of the modern world itself with its frozen and silent prospects receding into the new mythologies of outer space. Szirtes has opted wisely for a colloquial rendering of the poem, and the text is thus offset nicely by the fulsome illustrations. *The Tragedy of Man* continues to stimulate, especially in the age of revived fundamentalist zeal and cynical revisionism. As neither the mosque nor the ministry for foreign trade will take comfort in Madách's bleak predictions, perhaps a new school of minority literature should emerge half way between Alsósztrégova and Budapest. Assisted by translators as good as the wily Szirtes, even the major literatures could take part in its debates.

Hugh Maxton

The bite of nausea and reason

György Petri: *Valahol megvan* (Somewhere It Exists).
Szépirodalmi, 1989. 270 pp.

In the Hungary of today a competent writer of verse is treated as a young poet to at least the age of 35, if not longer. It takes a great deal of luck and a fair amount of craft for the poet's work to take on a personal character in the eyes of readers much earlier than that. We seem to have left behind the age of infant prodigies or prodigious breakthroughs—of a Rimbaud or a Shelley or, indeed, of a Petőfi, who died on the battlefield at the age of 26, was mourned in verse by such poets as Hugo and Heine, and of whom for many years the hope was cherished in Hungary that he had only disappeared and was possibly living somewhere in Russia. Examples can be found in the present century as well, for instance that of the late Sándor Weöres, whose emergence at the age of fifteen created a sensation. Is it perhaps that nowadays we no longer pay proper attention? Is it that even writers pay no heed to each other? Not only to the "young" but also the mature either, who already have considerable oeuvres to their merits because they write too little (e.g. Magda Székely), while others are said to write too much (Dezső Tandori). But since when has poetic output been a question of quantity? I could go on making a list, constantly growing, of the consummate oeuvres of the generation of forty- and fifty-year-olds (as in fact I have done more than once on these pages). I am thinking of those who go on with their work behind the daily din of current vogues, establishing formal foundations on which vaulting buildings can be, or have already been, raised. I have in mind poets like László Bertók, Judit Tóth, Ágnes Gergely, Zsuzsa Takács, István Baka, or Bálint Tóth. And these are poets to whom we have devoted much less attention than we should have done.

For the present I am concerned with a poet whose appearance, just after Tandori made his brilliant début, earned him a keen and justified attention. This attention, however, was later, artificially and wrongfully, diverted, for political reasons, which made official publication impossible for him. His latest volume could only appear as a piece of *samizdat* literature; it has been only recently that his selected and new poems could be published legally, under the title *Valahol megvan* (Somewhere It Exists).

What does Petri write on? About the very life and soul of all poetry: existence, and the most important questions of that human existence. About shameful torment, humiliating transiency, the aimless wandering within the range of our life, and the alienation which fills it. We should take a closer

look at this perception of the world and of the self. At the beginning of the selected volume, presumably written much earlier, Petri states: "Everything / is uncertain. / Where am I from that / youth who believed / to draw the world—like a pair of gloves! —on his hand." And he concludes this decisive poem, entitled *Metaphors On Our Position*: "How much time may we have left, how much time, / it keeps clattering fainter and fainter, how much more, how much more, / before consciousness perforates us / into nought—or splits us like a festered star?" This is by no means a sense of satisfaction, either with himself or with the world. It is a continuation of, and complement to, the attitude towards life expressed in *The Morning*, which opens the volume: "The bite of nausea and reason / has opened courses within me / water in the limestone [...] God, Lord of the medium of our life / arouses universal doubt in us / in the state of our own existence." And this feeling attracts a typical stock of similes: "Our dreadful solitude scales, like rusty rails in the sun," or: "Our mind sprouts like inedible potatoes in the heavy dust of a cellar."

All these quotations come from Petri's early years as a writer. The later poems use even more forceful and painful formulations for the existential experience of irrationality and aimlessness, the shaping of the inner world, on which the poet himself professes: "With the passage of time one's inside only becomes worm-eaten." Let me reinforce this with one more quotation, this time from the later years, which have developed in the poet (and in most of his generation, at the height of their creative power) an acute nausea, as a result of the deceptive social conditions of the 1960s and '70s, their crippling policies, the swift succession of love affairs and marriages, and the death or betrayal of companions: "Well, enough of this. Phew! How I would like to cease / suddenly! Not to die, nonsense! A stupid, pathetic / word... no, to give out like the thread from the spindle. / [...] See, by the age of forty, man, even if he was really living and / not afraid to pay heed: turns into an overstuffed bag of ghosts, a store-house of dangerous lumber."

György Petri cannot remember the Second World War. If my calculations are correct, he must have been two in 1945 and thirteen by 1956, but by 1968—to take dates decisive for this part of Central Europe bestowed upon us by the East—he was twenty-five. Yet one cannot say that the general feeling which developed through his own experience of life would radically differ from that generation who were in their twenties during the war (at least

not as far as their disillusion is concerned). Nor is his greatly different from the painful desperation that burst forth out of the poet Mihály Babits, or in the mid-19th century, out of Mihály Vörösmarty. Indeed, it seems as if his disillusion were even more all-embracing, including all the motifs of life and lacking all counterpoints and handholds. This extensive disillusion (and this is interesting) seems to be typical of the poets and writers of his own age who, like him, were unwilling to consider writing as a form of service to the ruling ideology. An age-band who were brought up by the last four decades, redolent with promises and proclaiming justice and a brighter future.

As a psychological and even sociological mystery, this typical deep negativism (both in Petri and his fellow-writers) developed in a period that was incomparably milder than the period that preceded it. After all, Petri did not live through the war and the ranting fury of Hitlerism and Stalinism during his formative years, as the generation before him had done. His disillusion, as borne out by these quotations, is more profound and his faith in literature less strong than the disillusion and faith of the previous generation. I do not know the reason for that, but his predecessors (my generation), perhaps because they have brought with them an inheritance of the hardship-laden yet natural faith of both the society and literature of the 1930s, have lived and written, all in all, by firmer, more positive ideals. This holds true for poets ranging from János Pilinszky (who undoubtedly influenced the young Petri) to Görgy Rába, even if Pilinszky had his transcendentalism, while others seemed to take over concrete and latent moral ideals from their predecessors, the great *Nyugat* (West) generation.

But beyond this negativism there is another, basic difference too between Petri and his elders. This is already a specifically poetic difference, not merely one in outlook, and it lies in his singular mode of expression and prosody. For example, in his choice of words and similes, based on minute observation; in the intention to avoid a literary formulation which would devolve on him as a natural inheritance, or in the partial rejection of literariness, and indeed of the well-tried prosody and manner of erudition. Whether he is aware of it or not, Petri is a revolutionary of sincerity. That is to say, the evader, the eliminator of once exact but by now outworn formulae. Some of this must have been evident from the above quotations ("to draw the world—like a pair of gloves—on his hand", "man . . . turns into an overstuffed bag of ghosts, a storehouse of dangerous lumber"). But to demonstrate the individual sincerity of this poetry and the very special nature of its sense of phrasing even further, let me point to some more similar, deliberately anti-sublime imagery or vocabulary, which also express a grudge towards the laws of life. In the *Style of Horace* is among his later poems:

Now I could bear it, a quiet life, no time-tables;
scraping along without a thought, among hens and
sows.
would mend fences, change broken roof-tiles
for new, and rejoice when the tender marrow
blooms.

I've no more ambition than a corpse in its grave
worried by worms, dreaming that round its dying
dust there stands an incorruptible tomb.
I've lived. Seen enough. This short time
I'll spend sitting on my battered luggage in
a waiting-room littered with phlegm and cigarette
butts, as the buzzing in my head quietens, eyes
open, without a newspaper, tobacco or fizzy drink.

Disillusion has reached fullness here, as the imagery testifies: joy finds its expression in the flower of the marrow, action in changing roof-tiles, dreams in an incorruptible tomb, and reality in a waiting-room littered with phlegm and cigarette butts, and death worried by worms. The conclusion of the poem even intensifies the typical way in which this tragically bitter outlook upon life is assembled, after reaching total negativism, and the superiorly crude manner of expression:

In my pocket there's a crushed cigarette.
I'll scrounge a sip from some bottle or other.
A bum will give me a light. Then 'll snuggle down
into bad dreams of violence and power
in which I'm a police-dog with shiny fur.

Nothing bad can happen when I swoon into
pure reason. Only the soured Milky Way
gangrenes my scarred spirit's sole.
Until reaching that jetty on the Styx.

(Translated by Kenneth McRobbie)

I could go on quoting this tone endlessly. But this single poem has written all over it the indifferent acknowledgement of the tragedy of human existence, of the "creature", to use Pilinszky's term, without stirring the slightest degree of emotion. This feature is in contrast with Pilinszky. This is the most suggestive and, at the same time, the most original quality or Petri's poetry, which he achieves by the parallel expression of disparate, practically incommensurable pictorial elements. No poet reared on earlier principles would dare to link the shiny-haired police-dog and the soured Milky Way with the spirit without sensing the danger of a literary, poetic affectation, and trying to find a more harmonic mode of fitting the different elements together. Strangely, Petri conquers the reader precisely through this crude, rough strength of his. With his unliterariness, even anti-literariness, he has reached an exceptional quality, and become one of the very best Hungarian poets of our day.

Balázs Lengyel

A protean poet

Sándor Weöres: *Eternal Moment*. Selected poems.

Ed. and intr. Miklós Vajda.

Foreword by W. J. Smith. Corvina, Budapest—Anvil Press Poetry, London—New Rivers Press, St. Paul, Minnesota. 1988. 152 pp.

Between the call from Budapest asking if I would review this book, and its arrival some weeks later, Sándor Weöres died at the age of seventy-five. I learned of his death from an obituary notice in *The New York Times*. It referred to Weöres as "Hungary's leading poet," mentioned that he had been nominated several times for the Nobel Prize, noted that he had been silenced during the last years of Stalinism but that he had visited the United States and given readings here in 1977, and that a selection of his poetry misreported as *Eternal Movement* had recently been published. All this in twenty lines. *Sic transit . . .*! But it is also apparent that there would have been no notice at all if news of his death had not been phoned in by William Jay Smith, one of the translators whose work is represented in the present volume.

Weöres was a giant of contemporary poetry, a world-class writer of the first rank. That he was deserving of the Nobel Prize goes without saying. That he did not receive it should come as no surprise: neither did Illyés. The distance between Stockholm and Budapest is considerably greater than the eight hundred miles I measure on my map. But then he also missed out on the Neustadt Prize when he was one of three contenders a few years ago. The other loser? A chap named Borges. What a world!

Edwin Morgan, the principal translator of this selection — just over half the versions are his — speaks in an "afterword" about the difficulty of defining "a Weöres poem." He's right. And what's difficult is getting a handle on "Weöres." He must be the least ego-driven poet of our time. His capacity for empathy is virtually self-effacing. He is, as Keats would have it, "continually in for" something, someone, some vision of a reality in which he figures more as medium than as participant: "I am poured into everything and everything pours into me . . ."

("Whisper in the Dark," tr. Morgan)
Hence the protean nature of the work, and of our sense of the author behind it. Hence too the wide range of affinities, at times echoes, audible in one poem or another. Smith, in a "foreword" to the present volume, mentions Rilke, Dylan Thomas, Eliot, Valéry, Morgenstern, and Blake. I would add Emily Dickinson ("Eternal Moment" in Morgan's

translation) and George Herbert ("On Death" in Alan Dixon's). When Weöres tired, for years on end, of ringing changes on "Weöres," he invented, as Miklós Vajda tells us in his introduction, an early nineteenth-century woman poet whose complete works he wrote, including her letters and translations, together with a biographical study of her by one of her contemporaries, also fictitious: a *tour de force* of lunatic brilliance matched, on such a scale, only by the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa.

But none of this detracts from Weöres's originality. On the contrary, it signals his endless inventiveness. Reading through this selection, one is struck over and over by the exuberance, the wild fertility of his imagination, by the leaps of image and meaning within individual poems, by the phantasmagoric nature of his vision. Fundamentally, it is a deeply religious, sacramental vision of life—but not an orthodox one, in part because it refuses to censor:

From soil to heart, all things sing
not with intellect: they respond with their being
like a woman, a poem, just as they are.

("Eternal darkness clings . . ." tr. Morgan)
More than your heart's cloudy afflictions,
more than your mind's labour of doubt
value your toothache more than that,
for it shines out.

Your questions have only words as their answer,
but each thing answers itself.

("Signs," tr. Morgan)
A prevailing strategy of Weöres's work (and I must assume that these 125 pages are representative of the total corpus of 1800 pages) is paradox. The strategy operates most obviously on the level of language, but, more deeply, it is central to his vision:

The motionless approaches all the time.

*

Form is motionless, only its appearance dances.

*

Here we lie, running around.

*

I am two, subject and object;
only death can make me one.

("Aphorisms," tr. Smith)

The statement of this last quoted "aphorism" recurs often in these poems: it is death which will provide unity, integrate the dualities (antinomies, Yeats called them) of being human, resolve the paradoxes. The vision is of oneness with one's world—Eastern thought attracted Weöres from his early years. Life and death don't interest me, I only need that harmony which matter cannot even bear or reason take into its sphere.

("Internus," tr. Morgan)

This is not, though, to suggest that there is anything ascetic about Weöres. The vision of ultimate harmony is *grounded* in the world's body, often sensuously so—an aspect of Hindu thought with which he was no doubt familiar. Even in the important "Seventh Symphony," where a reverie on the body of his dead mother virtually fuses with a vision of the Virgin, the rich profusion of imagery sensualises the experience in a theatrically ecstatic manner reminiscent of Richard Crashaw's Saint Teresa poems or, even more aptly, of Bernini's treatment of the same subject in the church of Sta. Maria della Vittoria in Rome.

There seems to have been nothing programmatic about Weöres's compositional practice, at least as he reflected on it. Such a confession as

I wrote my thousands of verses half-awake,
in tobacco-smoke, I don't even know how

("At the End of Life," tr. Smith)

should not be dismissed too lightly: it accords too well with his sense of himself as medium, as the almost childlike instrument of external, Orphic, powers—a view of the poet's role he developed early on in his doctoral dissertation, significantly entitled *The Birth of the Poem: Meditation and Confession*. Images, as well, seem to have been "given," in the sense that he saw himself as the passive recipient of optical effects over which he had no control. A passage (tr. Smith) in his "Sixth Symphony" is explicit about this:

if you shut your eyes, where light has stabbed,
the wound
continues boiling for a few more seconds,
the colours reversed, a hedgerow of blotches,
then washed away, your closed eyes project
a dark space only,
like a vaulted hall, you cannot tell how large,
now small and reassuring, now immense,
although it never changes,
and a flame leaps in it sometimes, near or far,
who knows,
and a soothing or a terrifying face,
and memory's faint skeletons come flying,
and miracles, those creatures of glass, fanning.

Still more succinct (though no longer concerned with the negative image) and at the same time more functional in integrating this effect thematically—the poem was written a decade after the "Sixth Symphony"—is the first of the "Signs" (tr. Morgan):

The whole world finds room under my eyelid.

God squeezes into my head and heart.

This is what makes me heavy.

This is what makes the donkey I sit on unhappy.

I referred earlier to the difficulty of locating "Weöres." It's a difficulty which he compounds by the cagey ways he positions himself with regard to his material. As "two, subject and object" (in the last of the "aphorisms" quoted above), he insists on the impossibility of a single definition, of an integrated psychological profile, so to speak. But other poems suggest that the positioning of the poet *vis-à-vis* his world is more complicated still. The following passage appears in "At the End of Life":

I experienced everything projected on a screen,
even when it was I who was being chased
to go and tend the pigs, dig graves, or when
shots whistled around my head,

I was asleep all the while, unresponsive . . .

It would be a mistake to take these lines as merely expressing regret at not having been more alert to life's possibilities. True, the poem proceeds to vent a desire

. . . at last to wake up and run,
to gulp down missed lusts,
to rejoice, and regretting joy, to hurt,
and to die, crippled by my too-late pleasures,
lost in stench, filth, and shame,
a mad dog on a dungheap.

But [emphasis mine], as with everything

else, I am also only dreaming this.

If until now I have never awakened, I know
I'll go on snoring until I die. Dying perhaps
will make me face awake

the burden of all that I have neglected. Perhaps
in the silence beyond sleep, I shall awaken.

In short, there is no way he could have been otherwise than as he has been: distanced, that is, from the movie screen, alienated from his own deepest desires, separate from his most fundamental self. The final section of "Internus" goes so far as to postulate an "I" who is observing, disembodied, the corporeal Weöres.

Two or three years ago I watched Weöres being interviewed on television. He was already weakened, a small frail man looking older than his actual years. But what was most striking was that never once, as I remember it, did he raise his eyes to the camera or to the person conducting the interview. They seemed to be trained doggedly on some point nearby at knee-level, as if to have raised them would have been to establish an unwanted contact. My conclusion at the time was that he was painfully shy, uneasy with the format, and wishing he were somewhere else. As I read through these poems, for the first time in bulk, it occurs to me that he really was somewhere else, watching and disdainful of the little man trying to explain himself to a live audience.

Miklós Vajda is to be congratulated on this handsome volume, the first in English since Edwin Morgan's Penguin, which has been long out of print. All of the poems from that book are included here, to which Morgan has added a further dozen, including the marvelous "De Profundis". The poems are presented chronologically, with dates and translators' names appended. Some light ones are among them, including the delicious "Variations on the Themes of Little Boys" in William Jay Smith's rendition; and the book is laced with Weö-

res's witty line drawings. Since it is a joint venture, with editions in England and America, as well as Hungary, it is to be hoped that Weöres will at last be recognised abroad for the master poet he was.

Bruce Berlind

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The homeless

Péter Nádas: *Évkönyv* (Yearbook). *Ezerkilencszáznolcvanhét-ezerkilencszáznolcvannyolc* (One thousand nine-hundred eighty-seven—one thousand nine hundred eighty-eight). Szépirodalmi, 1989. 345. pp.; Mihály Kornis: *A félelem dicsérete* (The praise of fear) Prose—essay—criticism. Szépirodalmi, 1989. 225 pp.; Zolt Csalog: *Fel a kezekkel!* (Hands up!) Maecenas, 1989. 403 pp.; Zsolt Csalog: *Börtön volt a hazám* (My country was a prison). *Hosszú István beszél* (István Hosszú is speaking) Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest—Hungarian Human Rights Foundation, New York, 1989. 117 pp.

Péter Nádas's new work, *Yearbook* is a book of recollections and meditation. It is the child of the writer's resignation and self-control as well as of what the age demands: "I would have to give up my last refuge, my imagination in order to reach recollections", he writes early on. "It has been timely to give up every last refuge for a long time now." He would have to give up what made him wish to become a writer: his imagination. We have arrived at an age when imagination may appear in the guise of flight, the writer and thinker must face their personal fate and situation without any abstraction or mediation. This age is the present Hungarian crisis, as is indicated in the subtitle of the book: "one thousand nine hundred eighty-seven—one thousand nine hundred eighty-eight". "You get up in the morning, look round and ask what to do". If you happen to be a writer, you take a notebook and start writing-thinking about what occupies your mind.

"Yearbook" is broken up according to the passing of the year, its seasons and months. One of the distant inspiring examples was Livy's Annals. The influence is present in the text in the form of a short story-like adaptation of one part of Livy's work. Nádas did not altogether give up his imagination. "A sentence is not beautiful without fantasy." Anyway, he does not give a damn about art forms. More precisely, he gave way to the compulsion of the days, weeks and months looking for art forms which they desire for themselves. He entered in his notebook—he actually filled several in the course of a year—diaries, short stories, essays, letters, recollections, meditations. "I wanted to see what thinking

does if it subjects itself to everything that challenges it but does not succumb completely to the lures of any of the art forms. This time I did not want to make my life time more noble with the help of literary art forms."

What did Péter Nádas think and write about in his rural isolation between February 1987 and February 1988? This man of forty-eight, born and brought up in Budapest, coming from a family of middle-class origin, has been living and working in a remote, depopulated village, in Western Hungary. He not only writes but does odd jobs around the house, just like the handful of people who still live in the half-deserted village. He writes also about this choice, about the urban traditions having ceased in Budapest by the 'sixties, and "life has become chaotic in this city", "this city has not even one corner where it could find some rest or at least transitory security", Budapest "has no citizens just inhabitants", "it is not a chance occurrence either that it has become most vulnerable just at those points where the principle of communality should operate flowlessly: in hospitals, cemeteries, sewers, schools, water pipes, the air, the telephone network, delivering letters, clearing away the snow, or on the pavements, in the entrance lobbies and on the staircases . . ." Then there is the fact that although the traditional peasant way of life was in ruins as well in a village one can still get closer to oneself, one's fellow human beings and nature.

The October-November chapters of "Yearbook" are devoted almost entirely to running, the writer's running in the fields, which, when the going is good, makes him forget altogether that he is a

thinking and civilized human being. When engaged in such activities, he hits upon some ancient skills, "uses experiences he has never had; or may make use of all that he has been preserving unconsciously as the inclusion of the experience gathered in previous lives." The scenery merges with the spiritual life of the runner. "It is not an exaggeration to say that I operate in the history of the Earth, more precisely we collaborate, and I was really moulded from the element which I try to break away from."

And yet it was at the time of the writing of "Yearbook" that the political and economic, crisis, lasting up to the present day, and becoming increasingly deeper, started, together with the hysterical re-politicisation of everyday life and the financial and moral deterioration of millions of people. Although "Yearbook" reacts to those developments in a palpable, moreover proclaimed manner too, these are the facts and events which give rise to the compulsion of recollection and musing, as well as to giving up the last resort of the imagination—Nádas does not engage directly in politics anywhere, and although we can find in the book a few precise, calm, to-the-point statements about the historical derailment of the past thirty-four years, a few personal memories, concealed confessions about October 1956, on the whole "Yearbook" argues with its age in the indirect manner of its expression of a writer's behaviour which can be described as "conservative", "alternative", or simply thoughtful and sensitive. A narrative—placed in the summer and early autumn months—conjures up a triangle of his youth, and introduces the reader to a school of love which, on the one hand, teaches the depth and complexity of sentiments, and, with a Proustian detailed analysis, demonstrates against our dreary "adulthood" and "modernity", on the other hand, represents a version of Nádas' first great novel, "The Book of Memories" by insinuating that the emotional relationship of two people may only become complete in its context with a third person. Another short story, proceeding in the footsteps of Livy, strengthens the spirit of Latin serenity present all through the book, moreover contributes to the interpretation of our present with its political and moral lessons. The personal analysis of the examples of eastern and western ways of thinking transforms the memories of the year spent by the writer in Berlin into "closed short stories" which gain their own remarkable significance in a "chaotic structure", i.e., in "Yearbook" itself.

"Yearbook"—actually contrary to its conception, its chaotic structure—is a serene, classical bucolic meditation, about people still living there who preserve in themselves the conservative, traditional ideal of human dignity and sensibility. It would be difficult to decide whether this man is the writer himself or, in spite of all his personal remarks, is an imagined person, in other words, that

"Yearbook", in spite of the declared intention, is actually a creation of the imagination in a manner similar to all of Nádas' works so far. The idea operates and exerts its influence independently of all that. In its beautiful sentences formulated by the imagination "the hope of the intellect" is expressed "against blind fate"—the prime power of all narrative.

Under the title "In praise of fear", Mihály Kornis has published a volume, somewhat similar to that of Nádas, formally indeterminate but still coherent with its sovereign and personal tone. The forty-year-old Kornis, though he has already published a prose volume reviewed by this journal, has so far been mainly thought of as a playwright. In addition to Nádas and Spiró, he is one of the most original innovators writing for the Hungarian theatre. Just as his plays ("Hallelujah", "Kozma", "Judgement") so his prose writings too join together a diversity of tones, frequently extremist, evoking grotesque, tragically comic effects. His treatment of the living, spoken language is captivating, the way he handles slang, passing fashions, texts of advertisements and catch phrases, is similar to the manner in which modern figurative art moulds objects for use and *objects trouvés* into art objects.

Clashing tones are not alien to the new volume which contains fiction, essays and criticism. The essays themselves use aphorisms and provocative contrasts. They explain the writer's approach and worldview presenting extremes and contrasts simultaneously. The photograph which is simultaneously scandalous, blasphemous, sacred and mystical, provides a framework for Kornis' aesthetics. The amateur photograph is, on the other hand, shockingly common, degrading man's greatness and genuineness into a shadow, an appearance, on the other hand, "a picture of the world, identifying with its stigma on the conveyor belt, separately raped in its photographic reproducibility, which also indicates man's final helplessness confronting the released demon of a material which is not understood." The pious experience of the blasphemy of the photograph may assist us "to understand the misfortune of our age beyond a tragedy, universally spiritual and impossible to express in words." The purest form of appearance of the scandal and sacredness of the photograph are the pictures taken in the ghettos and death camps of the 20th century, "especially successful" since they "inform surviving humanity of what happened there in a way impossible to replace."

The ambivalent unity of the blasphemous and the sacred characterises Kornis's short story-like prose texts as well. Some of them are almost poems rather than prose, as is demonstrated by the subtitle of one of the texts, called "Excerpts": "Poems in prose". The most characteristic piece, the series of

visions called "Little Jesus", is a summing up of Kornis's motives variegated in a manic fashion. The common denominator of the garland of texts consisting of movements, etudes, scenes is that the Jewish boy in Budapest in the 'fifties, this dream-like copy of the author's subconscious, identified himself with little Jesus, who is part Saviour, and part the knick-knack of middle-class life, as well as a grotesque freak born of the contemporary chaos of values and ideas of Stalinist times. The first person child narrator, supposedly as a result of some kind of misty guilt feeling, becomes little Jesus as a young Pioneer, at times guilty, at times eminent, in the nightmare-like shifted present of the 'fifties as in some blasphemous passion play, until he is crucified, which happens within the framework of a picnic in May, as an event taking place in front of a jury and a photographer.

"Danube Lament" is another grotesque vision from his childhood. Again alternating almost hymnlike pathos with cheap banality and coarse, maddening commonness, Kornis here too catches sight of all the innocent victims of more recent Hungarian history, on the pattern of the Jews thrown into the Danube, as corpses floating in the muddy water at the foot of Elizabeth-bridge which is under construction, understanding for the first time, as it were, in this picture the shared fate of Jewish and non-Jewish victims as well as some kind of symbolic attachment between the Danube and the "beloved acquaintances".

Just as in several other writings in the volume, in this text too a distinguished role is allocated to the author's support for the revolution of 1956. Kornis, prone to myth in any event, recalls, almost with a religious piety, this time as the last sign of life of an agonizing country. "... 1956 is so memorable to me also because then, and for another half a year, people—*talked* to each other", he writes in his essay "A talk on talking." Since then the absurdity of our age has become immeasurably banal, to such an extent that it cannot even be talked about any more, and it is "a new development of a horrible strength which deprives people of the ability of catharsis-like suffering and makes all of us miserable in a way that, in addition, we look upon misery itself as something which is far from us, in some kind of tacky nowhere-land." Much like Nádas, Kornis also concludes that "today everyone, without exception, is homeless. Everything that happens happens beyond the reach of man. "This excludedness is the essence of the latent scandal at the end of the century." Kornis praises fear which is the beginning of knowledge, reality, hope—in opposition to the cowardice of our modern age which marks time without stepping forward, escaping from knowledge and experience. These days "the greater part of our life is spent in postponing our daring to be really, properly afraid".

In Nádas and Kornis the crisis consciousness

in Hungary appears in an abstract, indirect manner, filtered into essays and visions; in other books, and in a flood of them ready to break the dams, representing a multitude impossible to survey and characterised by a diversity of literary standards, everyone who had lacked a platform before speaks about what had been forbidden to discuss openly until recently, with a coarse openness which is the characteristic feature of documentaries. Publishers mushroom all over the place, most of them intent on making a fast buck riding the glasnost breaker. Some of these books are an explosion-like revision of the 'fifties and 1956; more precisely, the justification and rehabilitation of the latter. Stories of discrimination of the Hungarians of Transylvania belong to this category. Others, alas, are cheap sensations and shallow pornography.

Zsolt Csalog, who is now fifty-one, has been a dedicated, almost manic writer of documentary prose of high literary merit. His "Peasant Novel" relies on what an old woman has to say to describe the vanishing life of a Tisza riparian village, including the fundamental change in its customs. Csalog has recently published several books almost simultaneously. All of them fully exploited the resources of the tape-recorder. He interviews people whose life and story expresses his message and then edits the narrative, bringing out the authentic voice to a maximum degree.

The new collection, "Hands up!", with an appearance that is deliberately sensational and exploits the voyeur inclinations of the public, contains the portraits of twelve delinquent young people. They include several whores, petty criminals, pimps, drug addicts and homeless tramps. All of them grew up in care, they had to make their way without family support. As we read their stories, it becomes increasingly obvious that being raised in such institutes almost inevitably leads to psychological disturbance, offences, delinquency. One might declare both as a sociological and as a criminological precept that those who are raised in such homes will come under police notice sooner or later. Naturally, those who get to such institutions were in a handicapped situation earlier too and suffered its consequences. The institution only further increased the handicap. The conditions which there prevail, the reputation which such a bringing up earns one, as well as the first offences that often took one there, are all responsible.

The stories told by Csalog are each banal in the extreme, petty, at the same time shocking, eerie, unbelievable in their own palpable reality and preposterousness. It is unbelievable how helpless, naive, stupid, lonely these people are, criminals and victims to an equal degree, more precisely, victims simultaneously guilty and innocent (which one of us is not that?). A separate chapter is devoted, not only in this book but in Csalog's whole work, to the Gypsies who, if brought up in state institutions, no

longer really belong even to the community which labelled them anyway. However, on account their appearance they continue to be looked upon as Gypsies, therefore they have to suffer this handicapped discrimination for something which is actually alien to them already.

Although the way the book is presented, the backstage secrets of prostitution in Budapest, a few thrills in places suggest the suspicion of playing us for a sucker, in actual fact all that represents but the surface of "Hands up!". Csalog—though he is not present even in the form of questions—makes his fellow human beings speak with a special empathy and understanding, so that the story soon concerns not the case, not the crime, not even the criminal, but the human being. As a wardship lawyer, who worked with Csalog, says of him: Csalog does not interrogate but confesses. His socio-short stories are simultaneously authentic documentaries, unmanipulated, raw interviews, and well-edited narratives. The traces of his interferences are impossible to identify.

Csalog has also published the story of a Transylvanian Hungarian refugee: "My homeland was a prison. István Hosszú speaking." (See page 5 of this issue.) Although Csalog figures as the author, he actually makes someone speak, providing him with an opportunity to tell his story. István Hosszú's is the typical lot of Hungarian workers in Transylvania. He was a simple worker, who only wanted to work, make enough money to live on, and he would even have turned Rumanian bit by bit if that had been the price of making a decent living. In order to find a job he left his birthplace and moved to a mining district; his consciousness began to awaken when he was exploited as a miner together with his Rumanian fellow workers. It proved to

be István Hosszú's undoing, and at the same time his luck that he had preserved in himself his firm moral sense and strong character. These were what made him suspicious as a Hungarian. His troubles and his holding his own for long years are another common story. What is unique in it, perhaps, is that to the degree that courage, persistence and steadfastness challenge the patience of tyranny, they cause disturbance, especially if coupled with sound sense and self-control. The men of the Rumanian security service persecute Hosszú, they are ready to kill, but somehow they do not manage. By that time he is a fully fledged bush lawyer, news about his fight has spread. Finally, he emigrates. His story could be more horrible, more bloody—he was not even beaten up by the men of the *Securitate*, as others are almost daily. István Hosszú's story is that someone wanted to live a human life, he did not desire more than being able to live the simple life of a worker, but he was not allowed to do so, therefore he was forced to do something about it. He did not rise up as a Hungarian because he knew that the oppression of the Hungarian minority, kindling national conflicts, is only a symptom. The disease lies deeper and it afflicts Rumanians as well. The message of the story is that amongst those who oppress him and hassle him, there are a fair number of Hungarians, too. Of course, the main crime he was accused of, was being Hungarian, and that really made him Hungarian, for otherwise he would only have remained a human being.

Miklós Györfly

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Against the odds

Mihály Babits: 21 Poems from the Hungarian, by István Tótfalusi.

English text revised by Robin James and Paul Gerson. Maecenas, Budapest, 1989. 132 pp.

The name of Mihály Babits is primarily associated with the literary magazine *Nyugat* (or West) whose editor he became in 1929. Here he nurtured the major writers of three generations and was probably the single most instrumental figure in the European orientation of twentieth-century Hungarian literature. His translation of Dante's *Commedia* bears witness to this as do his encyclopaedic studies of European culture. As a poet too he was influential, especially once the first wave of avant-gardism after the Great War exhausted itself, when

poets such as Miklós Radnóti, István Vas, and Gyula Illyés, who had themselves passed through a modernist phase, turned to him. After his death during the war, and following the wholesale nationalisation of literature in 1948 his reputation declined, though not among fellow writers, and in recent years his stock has risen once again, not only through his greatest protégés such as Sándor Weöres, but through the general revival of classicism.

I am not aware of many Babits translations apart from individual things by Aaron Kramer,

J. C. Nichols, Kenneth White and a few others which, while exuding competence, would not have aroused an appetite for more. From these I would have said that Babits had a mystical temperament, a weakness for Swinburne, a romantic world-weary overview of life and that he suffered from cancer of the throat. None of these adductions would have been wrong but they would have told me more about the man than the poet, and the point about any poet is that he may be understood (and enjoyed) more through language than biography. The question: "What is this poem really saying?" is always invalid. The poem says itself in its own language. Most, though not all the translations of Babits hitherto—Aaron's "Ildikó" is one of the exceptions—have foundered on technical demands. They were so busy sewing up rhymes or botching them when they could not be stitched neatly, or matching metres or at least the feel or equivalent of metres, that the linguistic tension slackened, lost its credibility. Had Babits been reputed to be a lesser craftsman there might have been fewer problems. At best then, technically, Babits has emerged—if he has emerged at all—as an honest if slightly awkward Georgian in the English sense, someone closer to Walter de la Mare or John Masefield than to his alleged equivalent T. S. Eliot.

Babits's dates (1883—1941) tell us that he was already a mature man by the time of the First World War and the Republic of Councils, and immensely well-read, classically educated and craftsmanlike as he was, it is the poetry of the *fin-de-siècle* and turn of the century that would have left the strongest earliest mark on him. Ezra Pound's early poems tell us just as much: Baudelaire, Mallarmé, the *poète maudit* and the aesthete breathe their French odours over him too. Pound and Babits cease to be comparable after the War, and if I introduce Pound's name it is because he and Babits share that common bed where classicism is first drugged and seduced, then raped outright by the War and the advent of the machine. Out of this bed spring the ironies and formal tensions of the early and mid-century.

This isn't totally accurate of course. Art had begun to cope with the machine age before the War, just as it had with Marx and Freud and Darwin, but it took the shock of war to present these forces as clear grounds for action. And action wasn't in everybody's nature: there was after all much to lament. Babits too lamented, sometimes sadly, as in "Dream Has Cast Me Ashore" ("Az álmom kivetett"), sometimes more violently, as in "Street, in the Morning" ("Utca délelőtt"), although the very thing he regrets, "the filthy / and rocky shores of Reality" are his salvation as a poet and stamp his passport into the twentieth century, albeit as a hostage who travels against his will. Accused as he was to be of exquisiteness, of ivory-tower detachment, his verses show that at least the ivory tower, if high

enough, makes a good enough look-out post, and that the walls do not keep out the noise and the weather of the world below.

István Tótfalusi's translations are conveniently arranged opposite the original verses in Hungarian, which (in the case of the Hungarian language, alas) suggests that the pleasure is aimed as much at Hungarian anglophiles as at readers of poetry in English. The production with its small format, ostentatiously elegant typefaces, the Csontváry picture tipped in on the bibliophile binding, lends the whole a bijou air. The remarkable thing is that in various passages throughout the book one finds verse that is perfectly acceptable and sometimes positively good English poetry. These passages speak volumes for Tótfalusi and the learning and linguistic skill of Hungarian scholars, and in the case of the most successful piece, "The Book of Jonah," the English reader must begin to take Babits seriously. If that seems a trifle grudging as praise, it should not be taken as such. Knowing that Tótfalusi is Hungarian is inevitably a factor in our reading, and while not quite reacting with the patronising smile of Dr Johnson on hearing of women in the pulpit, some measure of genuine admiration is due to the bravura of the performance. One could leave the matter here and move on to consider merely the virtues of what is self-evidently good, but that would be even more patronising, so I propose to treat these translations no differently than if they were the work of an English or American contemporary.

Working on this premise we may note that the translator has taken particular care with the form—the music, the rhyme, the cadence—of the verse, and has a good but not infallible feel for the weight and balance of a line. I can best demonstrate this by reference to a specific poem. The first three lines of the sonnet, "The Epilogue of the Lyric Poet" ("A lírikus epilógja") have a resounding authority: "Compelled to be the hero of my verse, / the first and last in every song I write, / I long to shape in them the universe". The fourth shades off into archaism, slightly fey compared with Babits's original almost prosaic statement, "de még tovább magamnál nem jutottam": "but naught beyond myself comes in my sight". In the next quatrain the archaism (which is essentially there for euphony and rhyme) is maintained, though it is disturbed by the modern sound of "God alone can get it right", which also breaks the rhythm. The next two lines provide real difficulty, a compressed simile: "Vak dióként dióban zárva lenni / s törésre várni beh megundorodtam", to which "A blind nut shut in shell: this is my curse —/ to await being cracked in hateful night" is no solution, since the sound of the first line is ugly and the meaning obscure, and the syntax of the second line is unnatural. The next two lines are good again. "To break my magic ring I try in vain. / Only my arrow pierces it: desire —",

although one notes the inversion in the first. The third line is positively ingenious: "though I know well my hopes will shrink by half. A", to provide a rhyme for "alpha" in the last line. It is as if Babits had been reading Aragon, which is unlikely at this stage, and matches poorly with the judicious late nineteenth-century tonal balance of the rest. In the penultimate line the translator has, for the sake of length and rhyme, introduced a third antithetical pair which is not in Babits, that of "son and sire", but this is forgivable since it is in line with the other two. So on balance we have a readable translation but for three lines: this is almost as good as Kramer, and in some respects better since Kramer is blander.

The temptation to find ingenious rhymes is an occasional annoyance in the book, ("wherefore the hill, oh and wherefore the willow" from "An Evening Question" is positively funny to an English reader), and the mixing of modern idioms with archaic commonplaces is another. Occasionally it is an insensitive ear that interferes ("what shall I next break crumbs from to feed it" sounds like a tongue twister), sometimes it is an ungrammatical phrase ("I feel only autumn the way as wise plants and peaceful / animals do." Only one poem, "Daniel's Song" is absolutely free of problems and it is interesting that "The Book of Jonah" is the other that comes closest to total conviction. Having however catalogued the vices of the other poems I ought to mention their virtues before passing on to these two. Like the first five lines of "Blaise's Blessing" ("Balázsolás") and the general movement of that verse as a whole, which is far better than J. G. Nichols's version:

I humbly pray you, hear and help me, oh saint
Blaise!

When I was a child they laid upon
my tender throat a pair of snow-white candles-
ticks,

and from between the candles I
peeped forth like some frightened roe from
behind two twigs.

It is no mean achievement to have conveyed something of the broken delicacy of one of Babits's most touching poems about his cancer, and Tótfalusi's translations of "Like a Curious Herald," "The Good Tidings" and "The Game Set Free" are, though not unflawed, perfectly valid and must be counted as successes.

It is noticeable that the closer Babits moves to the Bible the better Tótfalusi is: "Daniel's Song" and "The Book of Jonah" are perfect examples of this. The rhymes in "Jonah" are usually unforced, and the syntax is natural and the diction consistent in both poems. This suggests that Tótfalusi is well

acquainted with the language of the Authorised Version or the King James Bible and with seventeenth-century English prosody as a whole: that, in short, he has found a tradition he recognizes. "Jonah" for an English reader is especially welcome since it makes more conspicuous use of irony within the biblical framework. While emphasising that neither of these poems is completely free of infelicities, the degree of success may serve to prove a point or two, which for all my good intentions, do take me back to the fact that Tótfalusi is after all Hungarian and not English.

Even if Tótfalusi were soaked in English literature from every period up to, and including, the present, he would still labour under one disadvantage, that the language in his hands would remain literary rather than live. Language is usage as well as consumption, and one cannot divorce one function from the other. It is because of this divorce that mistakes occur. I wonder whether Tótfalusi has read as deeply into the English eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or indeed the more conservative parts of the twentieth century as into the great fountainhead of the Bible and Shakespeare. If he hasn't it is scarcely surprising since many English or American poets haven't either, but for them, being constant users of the language, this is less important than for Tótfalusi. All translations need to be bedded into, or related to, a consistent tradition and be aware of the modern instinctive reaction to that tradition. If we can make connections the poems can begin to work—without connections the poem is unreadable as a poem, since, as I asserted at the beginning, the poem is indivisible from the language in which it is written. So perhaps Dr Johnson is right after all? Not entirely because every rule is proved by its exceptions, and exceptions do occur, though these, by definition, are rare.

So where does this leave Babits and the English reader? A little closer than they were. In the successful translations we begin to understand the nature of his modernity, that he did move beyond aestheticism into contact with a world we recognize because he felt and suffered it keenly. We are not yet in a position to make comparisons with Pound or Eliot or even Walter de la Mare, but in due time we might be. Tótfalusi's work shows the effort is worth while.

George Szirtes

George Szirtes' latest collection of poems, "Metro", was published by Oxford University Press in 1988.

Hungarian emigration early this century

"Valahol túl, meseországban" ... Az amerikai magyarok. 1885-1920 (Somewhere Beyond in Fairyland ...) Hungarians in America 1885-1920. Selected and edited by Albert Tezla. Vols. I-II. Európa Publishers, 1987, 457 + 427 pp.

Hungarian emigration to North America in the late nineteenth century up to the Great War and the fate of those who had emigrated have only been recently carefully investigated by historians and sociologists in Hungary. A systematic search for prime sources, other than the press, and methodical research into the history, social statistics and, to a lesser extent, into sociology, linguistics, and ethnography have, with few exceptions, only yielded substantial results in the past decade. Unfortunately even in the United States and Canada few competent specialists have carried out such research and the publications produced there have been utilised by few specialists in Hungary. The international migration of labour early this century and the history of the Hungarian diaspora in America have thus been less investigated than they should have been and are little known to the reading public in Hungary.

Albert Tezla, Professor of the History of Literature at Minnesota University, has produced a long-needed work which, based on research results and considerably enlarging our knowledge, deals with this period and Hungarian historical questions in a manner that can be appreciated by a wide circle of readers. Tezla chose the genre of documentary sociography, i.e. the form of an anthology made up of various contemporary documents with longer or shorter introductions and explanatory notes. The range of sources utilised is impressive: newspaper articles, press reports, legislative texts, travel writing, belles-lettres, private letters and, of course, official papers. The work is not an official reference-book, but the compilation is the first publication in Hungary of official documents on emigration and the Hungarians in America, by the Hungarian Prime Minister's office, joint Austro-Hungarian government agencies and the General Synod of the Calvinist Church of Hungary. Characteristically, the material of the Prime Minister's office has already been used by Slovak historians, who then published a source-book on Slovak emigration, but a Hungarian collection of such sources is still to come. Albert Tezla's selection deserves attention from this point of view as well. It is a pity, however, that the author has not gone through local sources other than the Hungarian press in America for material concerning Hungarian-Americans. We would be pleased to see extracts such as minutes recorded by churches, work-

ers' unions and other associations, or more of the family notes of certain emigrants and, for that matter, contemporary reports and surveys produced by the authorities and the various commissions concerned with the affairs of immigrants in the United States.

The new immigration

Hungarian emigration started in the 'eighties of the nineteenth century, at a time industry, the labour market and immigration itself had considerably changed in the United States. The era was called the period of new immigration and was typified by growing numbers of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. The majority came from the peasantry and found jobs in industry, which had begun to develop dynamically after the Civil War of 1861-65. They were thus concentrated in mining regions and industrial centres. In the introduction to his work, Albert Tezla describes this new period of immigration when, under the circumstances of intensive industrial development, the immigrants, in addition to suffering economic hardships, had to contend with prejudices and the various forms of intolerance rooted in the many theories of "Americanisation".

Emigration occasioned lively political controversies in contemporary Hungary. Even then the origin of the American fever was being seen mostly in the economic situation of the country, but the administrative bodies of the counties from which the largest number of emigrants departed, those speaking in parliamentary debates on the 1903 bill of emigration, described only the problems that were visible on the surface. The documents speak of low wages at home, land-hunger, unemployment, problems of small holders' encumbered with taxes and loan repayments; there were some who said that the peasants and farmhands who had chosen emigration in the hope of improving their financial situation were obsessed with a desire for wealth and even for peasant luxury. Others pointed to the tempting opportunities offered by conditions in America: considerably higher wages than those at home, a more democratic and freer atmosphere and more agreeable living circumstances. But what had the emigrants to say of why they had left their native land? A Cleveland-based Hungarian daily, *Szabadság*, tried to obtain answers by inviting, in

1909, readers' replies under the heading "Why have I come to Amerika?" The two most frequent arguments among those selected from more than a thousand replies were the following: some people were driven only by poverty to cross the ocean, and others were attracted to the New World by the land of freedom. In addition, many also voiced individual grievances, personal motives for their emigration. The régime was unable to put a stop to the flow of emigrants; it limited itself to controlling the movement, to putting difficulties in the way of emigration. It tried to make emigration subject to the obtaining of a passport and, by regulating travel permits, endeavoured to force Hungarian emigrants to leave the country via Fiume. The aim of this measure was not only to protect the emigrants against the doings of unscrupulous foreign agents but also to exercise a more effective control over emigration.

A considerable number of documents are concerned with the vicissitudes of the voyage. It appears from the narratives that transmigrants did not find complete security in the officially set and recommended route of emigration. Lack of organisation, overcrowding, Fiume's unpreparedness to provide for the huge numbers of arrivals, the breaches of contract by the shipping companies caused much distress to those leaving home. Under the conditions of the time, of course, a voyage of 10 to 14 days was no comfortable way of spending time even if there were no major corrupt practices. Readers' letters to editors as well as news reports give an idea of the travelling circumstances of the majority of emigrants in the world of steerage. In general, emigrants were taking on a greater risk when they proceeded in the direction of the German ports of Bremen and Hamburg; however, in the opinion of some people the shipping services from there cost less and also the voyage was often under more favourable conditions. A sample of a voyage full of excitements was given by the memoirs of an American citizen who had emigrated by escaping with the passport of someone else.

The contemporary press gave great publicity to the problems of the new arrivals. Fear of the medical examination and of deportation figures in almost all reports on Ellis Island. The working of the "great screening machine" is demonstrated by examples taken from "Immigration News," a permanent column of the New York daily *Amerikai Magyar Népszava*. These news items give information on the fate of individual immigrants, about their first impressions in the "promised land"—on the immigration officers or delegates of the Hungarian Asylum.

1.2 million emigrants

Both contemporaries and the historians studying emigration have been occupied with the actual numbers of people who had emigrated from Hun-

gary prior to the First World War and the emigrants' breakdown by nationality. In this respect Albert Tezla mostly shares the opinion of those historians who believe that over the three decades before 1914 about 1.2 million people left Hungary. A little more than a quarter of these were of Hungarian stock, while the rest came from other ethnic groups in the country. The greatest problem with a numerical description of emigration, and at the same time one of the most remarkable features of the phenomenon, is that intercontinental emigration was in fact a sort of relay made up of emigration and re-emigration. The majority did not leave their respective countries with a view to establishing themselves permanently overseas, but regarded their stay abroad as seasonal employment for several years. In the hope of becoming rich many set out several times, causing confusion in the registration of emigrants. Owing to this constant demographic change and because of the American methods of census-taking one can ascertain only approximately the actual figures in the given periods. In 1900 nearly 500,000 persons of Hungarian birth were counted, but only 46 per cent of them, about 228,000 people, spoke Hungarian as their mother tongue. This census data is reviewed in the work under discussion on the basis of a contemporary report which analyses the ethnic composition of Hungarian immigrants. In U.S. statistics, however, by "Hungarian-Americans" the report means the total of those who emigrated from Hungary. This inconsistency is often encountered also in later Hungarian publications on Hungarian immigrants in America.

Living conditions, on the way to integration

The longest, the third, part of the work surveys—over nearly 500 pages—the living circumstances and problems of the Hungarians settled "behind the Golden Gate." To begin with it examines the major questions of how they established themselves. How did the Hungarian immigrants accept their new, American, way of life; how did they experience the native American's biased view of them as New Immigrants; how did they react to these views; how did they try, through organisations and institutions founded by Hungarians, to protect themselves against the trials of arrival and settlement over there? Extracts from newspapers founded by immigrants provide information on all these problems. From newspaper articles, press polemics and from advice given by editors we are made aware of the immigrants' feelings for America, of their initial troubles. Information on jobs and wages indicate the possibilities of employment. The press reflects also one of the major difficulties, the challenge of the foreign linguistic environment. Initially, Hungarians felt little need to learn English,

for they often were together with compatriots both at work and in private life. But journalists often reminded their readers of the necessity of mastering the English language; some newspapers regularly published language lessons, or brought out English textbooks. They printed humorous stories and anecdotes to call attention to the difficulties and dangers with which the immigrants were or could be confronted when stepping out of their Hungarian linguistic environment. Experience of American idiom and vocabulary combined peculiarly with the syntactic and phonetic rules of the Hungarian language to give rise to a mixed language, Hunglish, which became a means of communication for the Hungarian community of America. The documents indicate that Hunglish can be regarded as a product of Americanisation, as a corruption of language still, it is beyond question that the establishment of these linguistic forms resulted from real communal creativeness.

How did the immigrants appreciate the differences between life in the old country and life in America, how was their life influenced by American conditions radically differing from those at home? The experience of the voyage and arrival and the old problems still fresh in memory are described in two letters sent home by immigrants who had just arrived in America. In addition to these two exceptional documents, Albert Tezla narrates the American experience—for want of better sources—by publishing poems and letters taken from newspapers. These have often been cited for their literary pretensions, but today they deserve attention more for their sociological content. Their tone is mostly mournful, sometimes sentimental. There is in them no end of references to loneliness, homesickness and longing to see the family left behind. Papers seemed to be fond of stories with unhappy endings, such as the articles which *Magyar Bányászlap* published on family life among Hungarian immigrants, intended both to inform and educate the readers.

The most interesting part of Professor Tezla's work is a series of reports on Hungarian-inhabited communities, which Lajos Ambrózy wrote on behalf of the government for the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the winter of 1908 Lajos Ambrózy visited some places inhabited by Hungarians, including mining and manufacturing towns. The reports he included in the compilation are mainly on the Hungarians of Pennsylvania, but mention is made also of cities like Passaic, Bridgeport, New York, Lorain, and Cleveland. The bulk of Hungarian emigrants lived in these cities and states. Ambrózy's reports abound in information, presenting the life of Hungarians of America in minute detail. They are also enjoyable pieces of reading. The reader finds himself virtually a participant of the conversations in certain Passaic, Bridgeport and other saloons. One or another prosperous entrepreneur or club leader becomes an inti-

mate acquaintance of the reader. We get a vivid illustration of the church life of certain communities, the problems of schooling and working conditions, we can become familiar with the fate and financial situation of Hungarians playing various trades and with the views they hold on their actual existence and future. Newspaper articles on the club life of Hungarians, on their participation in local politics and their activity in the socialist movement give us information in connection with South Bend, a small Midwest city. Here the work openings offered by an agricultural machine factory attracted the Hungarians, among them the author's parents, who had emigrated from Torontál county.

The vast majority of Hungarian emigrants found employment in heavy industry. They toiled amidst adverse and even life-threatening circumstances constantly exposed to hazards. The immigrants' life was even more difficult in the mines. Not only were working conditions more dangerous but they were almost completely at their employers' mercy. They were compelled to live in company housing and to shop in the company stores. The volume offers an ample selection of newspaper items and minutes describing the living conditions of workers forced to drudge in factories and mines. A series of articles related in detail a disastrous Pittsburg Steelworks explosion in which several Hungarians were killed. The reports point conclusively to the dangers inherent in the lack of safety measures and denounce the management's efforts to hinder an official inquiry into the circumstances of the accident so as to avoid being called to account. The responsibility of another employer, a mining company, is pointed out by another series of articles reporting on a mine disaster in Pennsylvania. The mine explosion—which claimed the lives of more than 300 men, including 75 Hungarians—was clearly due to the lack of proper safety measures. This Jacobs Creek disaster was the greatest tragedy that descended upon Hungarian labourers in America.

Because of adverse working circumstances and frequent industrial accidents, many Hungarian leaders in America recommended a return to the original occupations. Occasionally many of them experimented with agricultural enterprises, but practically to no avail. Hungarians had gone to America in order to make money, with which they wanted to buy land at home; working under contract in American agriculture was not convenient for the purpose. Incidentally, they did not have sufficient capital to purchase farms, and even around the plantations there were frequent instances of abuse and fraud, which also discouraged those intending to buy farms. In fact, only one major Hungarian agricultural enterprise was launched in the United States. The founders of the settlement called *Árpádhon*, in the vicinity of New Orleans, had run away from factories and mines to

Canadian farming regions; then, to evade the inclement winter of Canada, they migrated south, where they engaged in strawberry growing. The intense communal life of the Árpádhon Hungarians is depicted in the articles of their own paper, *Árpádhoni Kertészlap*.

Specific to the everyday life of the immigrants settled in industrial and mining colonies was the institution of boarding-houses, called *burdosház* in Hunglish. Single men who had come without families endeavoured to take lodging, as far as possible, with friends, relatives, and countrymen. Companies and contractors also offered temporary accommodation to their labourers. It was a widespread practice for immigrant married couples to let rooms to newcomers since the rent paid for board and lodging was an important source of income for those families. The press often wrote on this institution; thus tenants narrated their not always positive experience of boarding-houses, and the hosts complained of the financial problems of providing for their boarders. The newspapers especially liked to report on any sensational event, such as fights between lodgers, or conflicts arising out of liaisons between the mistress and boarders.

Contacts with the Old Country

What perhaps caused the emigrants most worries was the future of their children in the New World. The linguistic and social assimilation of the second generation bothered both those wishing to return home and those who decided to settle. To transmit the parents' language and culture would have required, besides the family background, the creation of institutions, especially a network of schools; this, however, was realised only in part and only temporarily. This problem has yet to be properly studied; here it is illustrated in a description of the operation of a tiny all-day Calvinist school in Johnstown, its struggle with superior authorities for financial assistance. This type of school did not become general among the Hungarians in America, it was tried out for a while only by a few congregations with the financial aid of the Calvinist Church. Catholic schools were of a different character and their ethnic functions have yet to be studied. Week-end and summer holiday schools were general. These latter introduced a relatively successful method of imparting Hungarian writing and reading, grammar and literature, and knowledge of Hungarian geography and history.

The last thematic unit of the work is devoted to the contacts between the Hungarian government and the Hungarian emigrants in the United States. The earlier documents included in the selection had borne out the fact that the government was not indifferent to the fate of Hungarians of America. Through its diplomatic agencies it tried to protect their interests against employers, it demanded

legislation providing for safety measures, it brought actions for damages in industrial accidents. It reminded the emigrants that they were staying in America only provisionally. Intervention by the government reached a new stage when, in 1903, it initiated what was called the American action, whose purpose was to encourage Hungarians to return home. In order to avoid diplomatic conflicts with the United States, the operation was organised in strict confidence. The secrecy was justified also by the fact that the action was applied differently to Hungarian-speaking emigrants and to those of other ethnic groups. With a view to promoting the return of Hungarians, their national consciousness had to be kept alive; this was done through financial assistance to churches, mainly to the Hungarian Calvinist Church, by the founding of schools and by subsidizing the patriotic press. To encourage return, it was planned to facilitate the purchase of land in the old country, to offer the home-comers the opportunity to buy property. The return of the other ethnic groups was not held to be a primary objective in view of the goal of creation of a Hungarian national state. Where these groups were concerned, the aim was to counteract and weaken the anti-monarchic propaganda spreading among the emigrants, to obstruct Pan-Slav agitation and the dissemination of socialistic doctrines. The government utilised the financial means available in a selective manner based on the double objective of the action. The American action has not yet been dealt with properly. Albert Tezla has taken an important step towards a scrutiny of the far-reaching government policy that was pursued in a very complicated historical situation. In the perhaps most successful chapter of his work he refers to confidential documents of that time summing up its principles and strategy. The papers deal with the most important aspects of the entire process but cover in more detail only those measures taken in connection with repatriation. A few documents analyse also views regarding the success of the action, the outcome of the government measures. The concluding chapter summarises the opinions of different party newspapers about re-emigration, the Hungarian government's purpose of repatriating emigrants. The newspapers were basically against their return because they did not really see the possibility or intention of eliminating those causes that had induced people to emigrate.

Professor Tezla's work as a whole gives a complex picture of Hungarian emigration. The chapters presenting the life of Hungarians in America also cover a wide range, although some items have not been given sufficient emphasis. The social stratification of the Hungarians of America certainly deserves greater attention. It would have been useful to demonstrate that the local communities, owing to differences in the industrial-urban environment, must have been widely different in or-

ganisation. It is a pity that the immigrant workers' mutual defence and self-help activities—including the aspirations of the left-wing and labour movement—have been unduly kept in the background. On the other hand, although the part played by the churches comes into prominence in several respects, it would have been proper to discuss the functions they fulfilled in the everyday life of immigrants, occasionally the measures of church organisation and its complications, too.

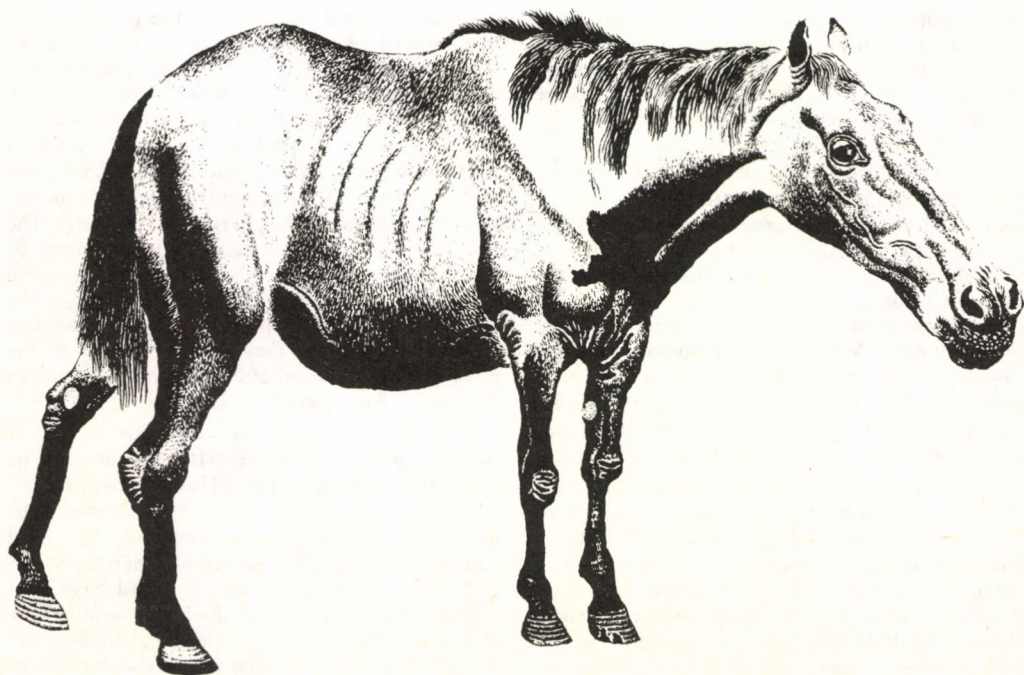
It is a question of methodology that, with a view to a better knowledge of history, some phenomena ought to have been approached more independently of the direct content of the sources. For example, as regards the function and position of the family, we would be interested in seeing what part family relations and ties of kinship in general played in social adaptation, how the families' strategy of life aimed at economic security was working out, etc.

A great virtue of the work is that its author has quoted statements by the emigrants, the protagonists of this migration, to illustrate what the little man thought of all the various problems of emigration, of life in America. For lack of personal documents, however, the authentic voice of the emigrant does not quite come through among the various sources. Problems are caused primarily by the extracts from newspapers, because they visibly bear

the mark of the editing determined by the tone, style, and value judgement of Hungarian journalism in America. Besides describing events, the press reflects the views of the leaders of the Hungarian communities (journalists, priests, club officials, businessmen), the patterns of behaviour they regard as desirable. Since one of the fundamental sources of the work in question has been provided by the Hungarian newspapers in the United States, it would have been well to deal in more detail with the particularities of the press. The newspapers representing diverse view and conflicting political principles differed from one another not only in the content of their editorials and commentaries but also in the shaping of their permanent columns and features, thus in their choice of readers' letters to be published among others.

Even in spite of these problems of content and methodology, Albert Tezla's work is a significant piece of research into the history of Hungarian emigration and the Hungarians established in America. It is an inspiring compilation, considering especially the urgent collection and publication of a specific type of historical sources, namely personal documents. Furthermore, this documentary sociology well demonstrates that papers arranged by a specialist in an appropriate manner can provide captivating reading for the general public, too.

Zoltán Fejős



Demography of the Hungarian diaspora

Yearbook of the Institute for Hungarian Studies. Budapest, 1988, 337 pp.

This is the second yearbook of the recently established Institute for Hungarian Studies. The function of the Institute is to research all aspects of the demography, sociology and culture of Hungarians dispersed throughout the world. The importance of its activity is apparent when one bears in mind that almost one-third of all Hungarians live outside the frontiers of present day Hungary. The present yearbook contains and comments on particular demographic data and trends among these Hungarians. Even ascertaining how many Hungarians live in foreign countries poses serious problems because the methods of collection and publication of census figures and other statistics have differed widely from country to country and from period to period and, in terms of their reliability.

Zoltán Dávid discusses the ethnic composition of the Carpathian Basin from the 1851 census of Hungary to other censuses taken in the years around 1980. He also gives his estimates of the probable trend of development of different nationalities up to the year 2000. The census of 1851 found the total population inhabiting the territory of then Hungary (exclusive of Croatia) to be 11 million, of which 40.7 per cent were ethnic Hungarians. In 1980, according to the census returns taken in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and Austria, the population living in the same territorial area amounted to 26.6 million; of these 51.7 per cent were Hungarians, 2.9 per cent Germans, 15.9 per cent Slovaks, 18.7 per cent Rumanians, 3.7 per cent Ruthenians, 5.7 per cent Serbo-Croats and 1.5 per cent others. During the 129 year period under review the percentage of Hungarians slowly increased, though remaining by and large stationary between 1910 and 1970; since then it has been on the decline. The proportion of Germans dropped to a fraction. That of all other nationalities diminished during the 19th century to slowly grow after the Great War. The author forecasts that the tendency of the past few years will continue up to the year 2000. He explains the decline in the proportion of Hungarians by their low fertility rate; since 1981 the number of deaths has been greater than that of births. Up to the year 2000 he forecasts a decline of 20,000 every year.

The Hungarian 1980 census counted 130,000 persons whose native language was other than Hungarian. In the past few decades Hungarian statisticians have estimated this number to be much greater, e.g. 420,000 in 1960. Dávid rejects these estimates, claiming that the persons of non-Hungarian native language in Hungary today must actually number 200,000. (Those of Gypsy

ethnic origin are not included in this figure, because reliable data on their first language is not available; the first language of a considerable number of them is Hungarian.)

As to the changes in the total number of Hungarians, Zoltán Dávid examines each country in the Carpathian Basin in turn. The 1980 census in Czechoslovakia registered 579,000 persons whose first language was Hungarian. The author refuses to accept this figure, since it would mean that the number of Hungarians increased by only a few thousands from 1970, although the natural population growth in Czechoslovakia during the decade in question was 6.5 per cent; it is well known that the natural increase of the Hungarian ethnic minority is smaller than that of Slovaks and greater than that of Czechs. For this reason he estimates the actual number of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia at 700,000.

According to the latest census in the Soviet Union, the population of the region called Zakarpatskaya Rus (Carpathian Ukraine) included 171,000 people of Hungarian ethnicity and 163,000 whose native language was Hungarian.

In Yugoslavia, on the other hand, the number of people professing to be Hungarian diminished from decade to decade, so that in 1981 they totalled only 427,000. The cause of this fall was, in part, the low fertility characteristic of the whole of the Vojvodina and, in part, as Dávid supposes, a considerable population loss resulting from migration to the West.

The persons of Hungarian native language who live in five small towns and villages in Austria number about five thousand.

To ascertain the number of Hungarians is most problematic in Rumania. In the 1956 census the Hungarian population of Rumania was given as 1,654,000 while, according to the 1966 census, it totalled only 1,652,000. The national distribution established by the 1977 census in Rumania found ethnic Hungarians to number 1,671,000. Hungarian sociologists, however, do not consider this figure to be reliable, since it means that, between 1956 and 1977, the Rumanian population growth was 26 per cent whereas the number of Hungarians rose by only 1 per cent. If the average natural increase in the population of Rumania as stated is correct, the number of Hungarians must have increased by 400,000 during those 21 years. According to published data on mortality and birth rates in the various regions of Rumania, natural increase in districts with an overwhelming Hungarian population was identical with the nationwide average. (In-

terestingly, natural population growth of the three Hungarian-inhabited districts was higher than that for the population of the whole of Transylvania. This is probably due—as it was a hundred years before—to the very low fertility of some of the Rumanians of Transylvania.) Allowing that some of the Hungarians might have assimilated to the Rumanians, Dávid estimates the number of Hungarians in Rumania today to be two million. Since emigration of Hungarians out of Rumania suddenly increased in 1988, and since the Hungarian state is ready to receive emigrants from Rumania, the author reckons on a similar wave of emigration in the years to come. Hence he projects that the number of Hungarians in Rumania will not grow until the year 2000 because the natural increase will by and large be creamed off by emigration, and thus the Hungarian population of two million will remain constant.

As a result of all these demographic processes, Zoltán Dávid estimates that the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin in 1980 totalled 13,768,000 and the number will have dropped to 13,485,000 by the year 2000.

Demographic trends for the Hungarians of Transylvania are also discussed in another two articles. Árpád E. Varga analyses first language statistics—by a breakdown of towns, villages and regions—primarily on the basis of the census returns of 1930 and 1956. In connection with the rapid growth of the number of people living in towns and cities, as those figures reveal, the number of Rumanian urban-dwellers grew and that of Hungarians declined, while the percentage of Hungarians in the rural population was barely less in 1977 than it had been in 1930. As a consequence of the fact that the Rumanians moving into towns were in a considerable majority, their proportion also increased in contiguous Hungarian-inhabited parts undergoing urbanisation.

Andrea R. Süle examines the accuracy of the first-language and ethnic distribution figures, using the post-1945 Rumanian censuses. Her conclusion is that the Rumanian census of 1977, in the course of which information had been asked about both first language and ethnicity, understated the number of the inhabitants of non-Rumanian ethnicity. Between 1956 and 1977 about 200,000 Hungarians vanished from census figures. Assimilation can hardly be have been that intensive. Most of the Hungarians still live in three closed agglomerations: in the Szekler area, in the Rumanian-Hungarian border zone and in the area northwest of Kolozsvár (Cluj). For this reason mixed marriages—mixed from the ethnic point of view—are relatively rare. Emigration in that period was also insignifi-

cant. The author thus comes to the conclusion that the number of Hungarians in Rumania today must be closer to, or even as much as, two million. It should be added that Hungarians are the largest national minority in Europe living outside the country in which they are the majority, on the territory of foreign states.

Gyula Popély points to the distortions in nationality statistics in the 1930 census of Czechoslovakia. Éva Kovács presents facts and figures concerning the inhabitants expelled from Kassa (Košice) in 1922 and shows that the expulsions, which applied almost exclusively to persons of Hungarian nationality, were unjustified in many instances, since those concerned were residents of that city.

György Éger analyses the changes that have occurred since 1880 in the nationality ratios of the population of the Drávaszög. This region, which has always been of highly miscellaneous composition, has since 1919 belonged to Yugoslavia. Since 1910 the proportion of Hungarians has seriously diminished (being 10 per cent in 1981), Germans have practically disappeared and the ratio of Croats and Serbs has sharply risen.

Zoltán Fejős presents various figures about the Hungarians in the United States of America. In several censuses the places of birth were inquired after. According to the data the United States, in 1980, had 144,000 Hungarian-born inhabitants; this number shows a noticeable decline because immigration has slackened in the past 30 years. In the 1980 census the language spoken at home was enquired after and not the native language. The answers showed that the number of those speaking Hungarian at home totalled 179,000. At the same time, finally, inquiries were made—a new feature—into ancestry. Accordingly, of the 1,777,000 persons who professed to have Hungarian ancestry, 727,000 claimed to be of purely Hungary extraction.

Ilona Kovács examines, on the basis of the public library holdings of Hungarian-language books, the demographic distribution between 1910 and 1940 of Hungarians living in New York City.

These essays on demographic data and trends concerning Hungarians are accompanied by some other articles in the volume on various related topics.

In the past few years there has been a dearth of research of this nature. Thus the public has had insufficient, and often inexact, information on Hungarians in other countries. The yearbook of the Institute for Hungarian Studies is a useful contribution to the establishment of real facts.

Rudolf Andorka

The big talking-shop

**András Gerő: *Az elsőprő kisebbség. Népképviselőt a Monarchia Magyarországn*
(The Overwhelming Minority: Popular Representation in Hungary under the Dual Monarchy). Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 1988, 293 pp.**

In 1867 constitutionalism was restored in Hungary, as is stated and read time and again. But what kind of constitutionalism was it? From the aspect of constitutional law, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, in quest of the continuity of the constitution, went as far back into the past as it could, to wit, to 1848. The legal definition of Hungary's relationship with Austria was modified, but otherwise the Constitution of 1848 was—in principle—put back in force. "We have regained what was accomplished in 1848, and now we can go forward", proclaimed those who made and supported the Compromise. We have relinquished what was accomplished in 1848 and must continue fighting to regain it," proclaimed the opponents of the Compromise. In fact, the Compromise was what the word itself implies, but it would be futile to try to strike an historical balance by putting the "relinquished" laws (mainly the 1848 guarantees of Hungarian independence) on one side of the scales and those which were regained two decades after on the other. The expedience, usefulness, and success of the system created by the Compromise depended on whether it would prove fit for further development and what progress it would make possible over ten or twenty years by 1877 or 1887, or still later. Although the system lasted only half a century, this was long enough for its elasticity and flexibility to be tested.

Not quite two decades went by between 1848 and 1867. Nor was it any wonder that the year 1848 was taken as a basis for the establishment of the new system, the more so because Hungary's constitutional system of 1848 was considered as one of the most advanced in the Europe of the day. Accordingly the franchise was regulated in 1867 by re-enacting the electoral law of 1848.

In 1848 the suffrage was not yet made universal, being subject to property or occupational qualifications. But the property threshold was the lowest in contemporary Europe; since in the agrarian Hungary of the day, someone who owned a quarter of a land unit tilled by serfs was qualified to vote in general elections; a rough estimate is that one in four or five adult males had this right.

A look round the Europe of 1867 makes it clear that even after the lapse of some twenty years

this qualification complied with the usual run of elective franchises. (Universal manhood suffrage had only been introduced in Switzerland and France.) The following decades, however, brought with them a gradual extension of the franchise and, later, universal suffrage, all over Europe. What happened in Hungary in this respect? Apart from minor modifications, scarcely any changes were made to the voting qualifications over this half century. What was the reason for this rigidity which resulted in the growing political backwardness of Hungary? In actual fact an ever fiercer struggle was being waged for universal suffrage in Hungary. In neighbouring Austria, in Germany, a considerable number of social democrats were present in parliament; in Hungary, under the given electoral system, not one worker was elected to the legislature until the collapse of the Monarchy.

It was not the intellectual abilities or the prejudices of the ruling class that can be blamed for the failure to extend the suffrage. The ruling circles of Hungary were certainly not wanting in political skills and flexible responses. But they were unyielding in this respect because what was at risk was the Compromise settlement itself, which made it possible for Hungarians within the Dual Monarchy to retain their leading role *vis-à-vis* the numerical superiority of the ethnic minorities in Hungary. Even the least extension of the suffrage would have resulted in the enfranchisement of common people opposing the Compromise, the House of Parliament would have had more and more members wishing to modify or even to suppress the political system created by the Compromise. If such a parliamentary member was of Hungarian ethnicity, he would obviously adhere to the Independence Party opposed to dependence on Austria; if he came from any other ethnic origin, he would advocate in parliament a programme for the transformation of the internal conditions of Hungary. For not even the given electoral system could positively guarantee a majority that the government could rely on. Under the actual circumstances this majority had to be created, plainly speaking, by using any and all possible means.

This system, its working and operation, is the subject-matter of András Gerő's book, whose

appropriate choice of title, "The Overwhelming Minority", expresses succinctly the fact that, though the government's supporters were in a minority both in the general public and the electorate, those in power contrived to create a majority for themselves.

The initial chapters of the book describe the electoral system of 1848, the arguments over its post-Compromise modifications and corrections. Members of the Hungarian Parliament were delegated by the electoral districts. Elections were held in 395 constituencies; the members, including those sent by Croatia, numbered 413. During the whole era only 5 to 6 per cent of the population were qualified to vote. This stagnancy is the more surprising as the inhabitants of Hungary grew more prosperous, even if only slightly, and the number of those in intellectual occupations also increased. But the constant adjustments, almost without exception, tended towards restrictions. (In the 1870s, for example, electors who were in arrears with their taxes were deprived of the franchise.) There was only one constituency in which more than six thousand voters were registered; in three-quarters of the constituencies less than three thousand voters were on the electoral roll. Over 80 per cent of all qualified voters in Hungary participated in the elections, but even so we can surmise that there was ample room for manipulations during electoral campaigns: one or two thousand voters were easy to influence or bribe.

The surmises are proved correct in the chapters entitled "The way elections were conducted" and "Those elected" in Gerő's book. By combing through a vast amount of literary sources and newspapers the author vividly describes here what actually took place during electioneering (the reconstruction is also helped by the reproduction of many contemporary illustrations). He emphasises what cases of crude interference were occasioned by the openness of elections. The struggle in the individual constituencies was directed by both the governing party and by the opposition from their own election headquarters in Budapest. Gerő also discloses the financial mechanisms by means of which money made its way, overtly or secretly, to the local key figures in the political campaigns, the canvassers.

It is hardly surprising that the proportion of the propertied classes in the House of Representatives was on the increase, that a growing number of the nobility (who made up 16 per cent at the close of the era) were sitting in the benches of the legislative assembly, the average age of representatives also became higher; finally 70 per cent of them were over forty. Accordingly, the author does not describe (in short either) the political course of the

parliamentary happenings of the era, he rather emphasises, by exact analysis and as a function of the time dimension, the proliferation of crisis symptoms, the growth of the difference between the interests backed by the House of Representatives and those shared by Hungarian society as a whole. His findings, with the disparities he analyses on the way, apply also to the parliamentary opposition, for it too could not escape the pitiless logic of the electoral system. The chapter entitled "The body divested of its dignity: the House of Representatives" demonstrates the increasing coarseness of parliamentary speech, the decline of the prestige of parliament. It presents the scene of the deliberations, life in the lobbies, the increasingly frequent periods of idleness during debates, the growth of obstructionism. The last chapter deals with the twisting of the mind and morality, with the ousting of independent-minded individuals, the excesses of demagogues, the unceasing flow of slanders and duels. The balance thus drawn up is not in the least encouraging.

Their contemporaries took pride in Hungarian parliamentarism. Since the Diet of the Hungarian Estates had been sitting and legislating at shorter or longer intervals throughout centuries up to 1848, the parliament of popular representation was regarded as its direct continuation, so that Hungarian parliamentarism was thought to have a counterpart only in England. The whole of the Diet, its two chambers—the House of Representatives and the House of Magnates (this latter was afterwards reformed to function as the Upper House)—enjoyed general public esteem (at least in the beginning of the era). The representatives drew generous daily allowances, good salaries and were granted special benefits; they enjoyed parliamentary immunity—meaning that only with the consent of the Diet could they be subjected to police investigation or brought to justice—they had free access to cabinet ministers, could speak freely about anything at the sessions, and the press was allowed to report on it all faithfully. The House of Representatives held its sessions in a temporary building erected in Sándor utca in 1865 (today it is the headquarters of the Istituto Italiano) near the National Museum; the magnates deliberated in the Museum's ceremonial hall. After the turn of the century, the current building of parliament was constructed on the bank of the Danube: a neo-Gothic palace suited to the needs of an empire, somewhat larger than the Parliament in London. Yet, as the years went by, the parliament of Hungary was losing more and more of its prestige. The poet Endre Ady bluntly called the House of Parliament the "house of lies", "bejewelled untruth", which obeyed only the command borne from Vien-

na on the sordid waves of the Danube. The newspapers continued to publish lengthy, verbatim reports on the meetings, but fewer and fewer were interested enough to read them; the public preferred to read the parliamentary sketches by the novelist Kálmán Mikszáth, who happened to be an M. P. as well—and depicted parliament as a homely and rather provincial club, where things worthy of mention occurred not in the main hall but in the corridors and in the restaurant.

How could the Hungarian Parliament lose so much of its importance? For András Gerő it was interrelated with the events taking place in the background, with the elections held every three and, later on, every five years. The system created by dualism involved a political catch 22: since its maintenance required the creation of a majority in favour of the Compromise, it was in need of assistance, from the conservatives and the liberals alike, it needed the money of the wealthy, the prestige of the aristocrats, the might of the authorities . . . It was sensible, independently thinking electors that were not needed.

Candidates for parliament, instead of promoting real interests, tried to win voters by means of nationalist demagoguery. (They did so at least in Hungarian-inhabited territory; in regions inhabited by the ethnic minorities, often for lack of interest on the part the voters, neither propaganda nor pressure was particularly necessary.) The politicians treated their electors with disdain, and at the time of elections even those in opposition found it more important to have the support of the party leaders than to persuade the electors to vote for them.

What helped them in their use of all sorts of trickery was, of course, not only the fact that the number of persons entitled to vote remained limited, but that entire electoral system served the same purpose. The members were elected—as they are today—by constituencies. These were drawn up, by and large, so as to conform to the number of inhabitants, but this was precisely what led to inequalities in the number of voters. For in prosperous regions, the property qualifications for the franchise were met by more persons, possibly even by thousands of them, while in backward areas of the country far fewer—maybe only one or two hundred—people were accorded the right to vote. Thus in these latter districts there was wide scope for bribery. The vote was open, it was possible to verify whom the constituents voted for. In the whole constituency there was only one polling station, and the voters took a whole day to get there. This compelling circumstance created new opportunities for the practice of bribery also in constituencies with a large electorate. The candidate's men

undertook to provide the electors with transportation, food and drink, and then they took care that the half-drunk men did not stagger over to the opposing party. During a voting day, the supporters of opposition candidates were kept waiting for hours and hours in the scorching sun (or in a down-pour), their wishes were noted down incorrectly, and occasionally the election officers even stooped to falsifying the voting records. The fact is that the opposition, the Independence Party, also resorted to such tricks, for it wanted to obtain as wide a mandate as possible and its principal aim was to gain a parliamentary majority. True, the Independence opposition alone controlled so-called "gratuitous districts," i.e. constituencies where the vast majority of the electors always and at all times cast their votes for candidates of the Independence Party.

Parliamentary seats could be won ultimately only with the help of the party bosses of the government or the opposition as a result of an improperly waged electoral campaign (except where a self-appointed candidate was a wealthy person who, unmindful of the expenses incurred, had himself elected with a non-party programme). It was not surprising that a political career held less and less attraction for the intellectual élite; nor did the governing party, which was compelled to have hundreds of M.P.s elected, have a large number of candidates to choose from in the several outlying districts. The powerful government party bloc in parliament was made up of a host of Mamelukes who voted, in accordance with the prime minister's will, for everything that was put before them. The representatives who thus received their mandates with a bad taste in the mouth or—if they had more refined manners—with a guilty conscience, had no real scope for activity in the House of Parliament, where they already had precious little to do for their electors. Of course, the scandalmongers were still in a position to dig up scandals, to hurl insults at each other's head (the oppositionists inveighing against members of the government), and these scandalous scenes continued to debase the prestige of parliament.

There was no dearth of debates: the debate on the budget would drag on for months every year, and many government measures—guarantees of interest for the railways, regulation of the administration of justice, redrawing up of districts, ratification of international conventions—all required the consent of the House of Parliament, the enactment of laws. There were especially stormy debates on the settlement of constitutional issues, matters concerning the empire as a whole. One such topic was the development of the armed forces. The army was a common Austro-Hungarian institution,

in the affairs of which no government or parliament was allowed to interfere because the monarch had the exclusive competence to deal with them. Appropriations for the enlistment of recruits and the finances of the army, however, required the approval of parliament, and in return for this the opposition demanded national concessions; for example, the use of Hungarian as the language of command in the regiments raised in Hungary.

But how could the opposition make such demands when it was in a minority and was easy to outvote? The minority also wielded the formidable weapon of obstruction. By making the best possible use of parliamentary procedure, the opposition could protract the debate on any bill for months. Parliament was pressed for time, if only because the budget bill had to be discussed early enough. Behind the scenes, therefore, the government was forced into concessions, but what took place on the stage, in the House of Parliament, made less and less demands on the attention of society. The fact was that, even with important bills on the table, the members were bickering about details, voicing legal arguments which invoked the legislation of a thousand years as a living body of laws.

The problems that were crucial to society were practically never placed on the agenda. No one proposed land reform; not a word was wasted on the situation of factory workers; questions concerning the national minorities which made up half the country's population never came up for discussion. Interpellations sometimes dealt with certain issues of emigration, workers' insurance, or current foreign affairs, but the talking-shop machinery of parliament was mostly running idle. The government's proposals, with some modifications, were adopted and given the force of law.

One might ask the question, and András Gerő does so in his book: Did not nearly all parliaments of Europe work this way in those times? Fraudulent elections took place and the opposition was outvoted elsewhere, too.

Things did in fact go on like this, but one party in Hungary, that of the backers of the Compromise, had grounds for remaining in power, because this guaranteed the survival of the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary; this compulsion took Hungarian parliamentarism further on the road to its fall, preventing it from growing into a sound parliamentary system. So what would have happened if the opposition had won the day? This came to pass once, in 1905. The governing party released the reins, and a coalition of the opposition parties obtained a majority.

The political situation became critical, but the dualist system was not in danger because the sovereign simply appointed—as formally he had the

privilege to do—a prime minister chosen not from the parties of parliamentary majority but among his own followers; since Prime Minister Baron Géza Fejérváry could not rely on parliament and was unable to find a way out of the impasse, the politicians of the opposition were persistently wheeled into giving up their original opposition platform almost entirely, so that they could then come into power and become the pillars and defenders of the régime.

Every parliamentary system has its own infantile disorders, but the inherent growing pains plaguing Hungarian parliamentarism from the dawn of the dualistic era proved to be fatal.

The Fate of Hungarian parliamentarism was called Count István Tisza. The leader of the Liberal Party, energetic in preserving the dualist system, had no difficulty in understanding that the given parliamentary order might be practically at any time upset and paralyse the functioning of the system. However great a majority supported the government, the opposition could—by resorting to obstruction, making propaganda and pushing through an electoral reform—continually impede and eventually destroy the whole system. In a crisis situation, for example at a time of armed conflict—for Tisza saw that war was imminent—the paralysis of parliament might be downright fatal. This was what Tisza wanted to forestall. He was unable to, nor did he intend to, do away with parliamentarism; for parliament was part of the dualist system, a counterpoise to Vienna, the Austrians and the monarch. He needed a sham parliament, an obedient tool. He wished to attain this by a revision of the parliamentary rules of procedure—he simply wanted to limit the opposition's possibility of manœuvring in parliament. In 1904 the opposition still managed to foil Tisza's first attempt; obstructionist tactics prevented his proposal for a revision of the procedural rules from being adopted. But Tisza's obstinacy ultimately triumphed: in 1912, when he was elected Speaker of the House, he forced through a revision bill by ignoring the formalities and by ordering the police to throw the objecting opposition members out of the assembly hall. (An opposition member fired a pistol at Tisza at this session, but the bullet missed the mark.) Compelled to obedience, the legislature passed emergency laws for the event of war, and although parliament was in session during the war (which was by no means the case in every belligerent country), it displayed intense activity only when defeat in the war already loomed large.

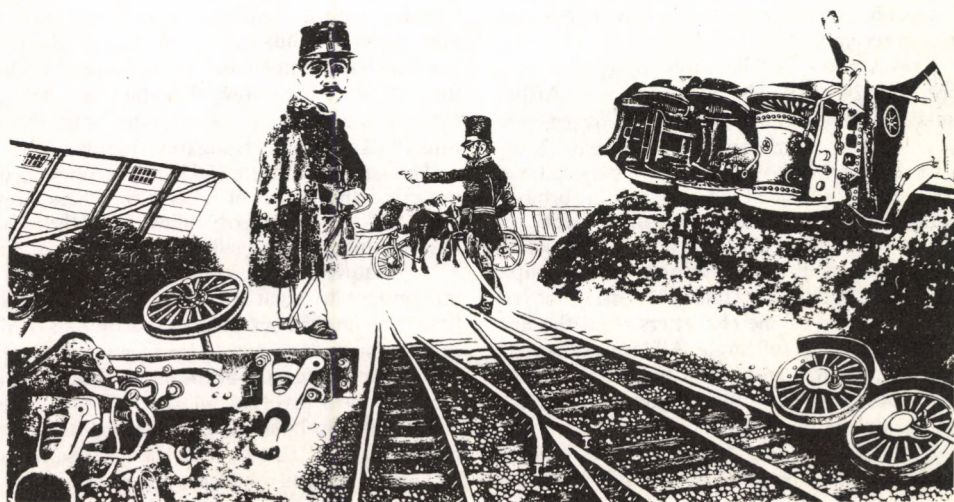
In the autumn of 1918, when the Monarchy collapsed, the parliamentary opposition that was still formally in a minority, namely the Independence Party of Mihály Károlyi, came to power in

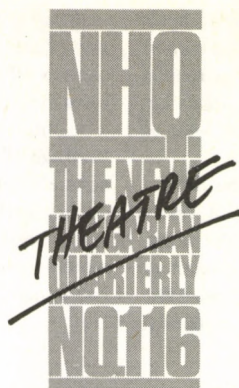
league with forces outside parliament, the radicals and the social democrats. The constitutional trap of dualism stopped working, there was neither reason for nor resistance to the Hungarian Parliament being organised on new foundations, on the basis of universal suffrage.

The "overwhelming minority" of the dualist era then yielded its place to a parliament really implementing popular representation in the bourgeois sense; nevertheless not even a parliament of true popular representation could settle at once the bankrupt condition it had inherited. The historical

task did not prove to be a simple one, the point was not that Hungarian parliamentarism, having shaken off the chains linking Hungary to the Habsburg empire, could have a clean slate to start with. The outgoing Monarchy bequeathed a burdensome heritage of traditions and mentality which still constitute a retarding force today. But disclosing and analysing them, which András Gerő has carried out in his book, are part of the treatment by means of which we may rid ourselves of the growing pains of parliamentarism.

András Gergely





Two cycloramas

Mihály Kornis: *Körmagyar* (Hungarian Ring Dance);
György Spiró-János Másik: *Ahogy tesszük* (As We Do It)

The Budapest *Vígszínház* has premiered two new Hungarian plays in succession. Both can look back on theatrical precedents and both draw their subjects from present-day daily reality. Both playwrights are leading Hungarian writers of the middle generation.

Mihály Kornis trained as a director but turned his back on direction; so far he has had three plays to his name staged. In 1981, *Halleluia* was judged by critics to be the best of the season; cultural policies of the day, however, prohibited the outcome of their vote to be made public. That play is about the post-war generation of intellectuals, which was not allowed to grow up by the social conditions of the day. *Kozma*, a near absurdist play, is on the conflict between the ruling élite and the silent majority, deprived of their personal rights. His version of Franz Kafka's *Das Urteil* was produced recently.

Kornis notes that he wrote *Hungarian Ring Dance* over 24 days. The title alludes to Arthur Schnitzler's play, whose title, *Der Reigen*, was translated into Hungarian as *Körtánc* (Ring Dance). The premiere of Schnitzler's play sparked off a scandal in Vienna at the time, and the production was banned. A product of the fin de siècle, the setting is the Vienna of the day. Casual partners meet in chain succession, with one of each couple stepping over into the next dialogue. One of the last couple meets one of the characters from the first scene, thus bringing full circle. All levels of society are present, ranging from the street-walker to the Count—these two being the characters in the last scene, the two extreme social castes.

Kornis retains the structure of the original work but moves the setting into contemporary

Hungary. He playfully refers to his model by creating situations that correspond to Schnitzler's play-ettes, often very maliciously. Schnitzler's Young Master becomes the Young Comrade, who wishes to seduce a respectable lady (as did his predecessor a hundred years ago) but she is the wife of his patron in the party apparatus with a past in the state security. Here the difference between these biologically analogous acts becomes clear. The Young Master's delight at most gets sensual titillation from a gain in prestige, while the Young Comrade considers his act a political one. Similar differences also occur where the other characters are concerned, Schnitzler's paramours enjoy themselves, Kornis's, for the most part, compensate. Or at least they are counting on gaining something: the Cleaning Lady, a flat, the Writer—to quote Chekhov—on a theme for a mediocre story, the Actress on a holiday in Florida. Even the life of instincts has become more worn, more disenchanting, less sincere by now. Only the two characters beyond the pale of society, the warm-hearted Streetwalker, and the Hungarian millionaire, reared on Hungarian literature and living in America, have preserved the bloom of innocence. Their farewell scene at dawn is a bizarre indication of the increasing dreariness in the quality of life.

Whatever today counts as piquant is not tantamount to what was piquant in Schnitzler's time. The implied sexual congress on a dark stage and the suggestive words leading up to it could cause a greater scandal at the fin de siècle than does the nakedness involved in sexual foreplay and a Hungarian vocabulary today liberated from taboo. Kornis, as is his custom and predilection, makes a free and ingenious use of the latter, employing the

widest variety of slang and argot. But what counts as true artistic piquancy is the way in which he casts a present-day social model upon the gossamer screen of Schnitzler's play. This is not an over-heavy model since such would topple the screen right away. After all, this is a titillating farce which calls for a surface treatment. The playwright's skill lies precisely in maintaining a delicate balance upon a cobweb, hovering on the surface. Kornis is successful making some death-defying linguistic somersaults and performing a few bold leaps into current politics, while rarely showing any sign of effort. (Thus, when unable to bring over some of his characters from one scene into the other, or when, for the Millionaire, he sometimes turns to ventriloquism with he himself talking instead of the character.)

The play treats the material in an effortless style. István Horvai's production is one of playful realism. It blends life-like and theatrical episodes in approximately equal proportions, with reality being satirized away by an instinct for comedy—but the farce is given the proper amount of everydayness.

A famous patriotic painting of the last century in Hungary was the Feszty cyclorama, a monumental canvas devoted to the Magyar conquest of a thousand years ago. Kornis's *Hungarian Ring Dance* is a kind of modern cyclorama. Rather than monumental it is bitter and ironic, telling of the way we live in this small country of ours.

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The novelist and playwright György Spiró has figured in these pages several times, for instance as the author of the plays *The Impostor* and *Chicken Head*. He collaborated with the composer János Mási k to write a musical play whose title is also a paraphrase, referring both to Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (*Ahogy tetszik* in Hungarian) and to Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. What is involved is both a verbal quibble and an allusion to that typical male attitude concerning the female mentality, "All Women Are Like That".

Spiró's title implies that this is how all of us do it. This is how we spoil our destiny. This is how we ruin our lives.

Or the way others ruin ours.

As We Do It is a modern melodrama pure and simple. It is on an abortive marriage, a mode of existence that has no chance. A quality of life that cannot be described. It is a private tragedy at the time of social turbulence, a bitter, frightening, disillusioned picture of reality, a piece of private history set against peeling walls and crumbling frames of life.

The balcony of the grey, mouldering block of our life on the stage is supported by a caryatid and an atlas. It is only at the end of the play that the two

turn out to represent the classical couple of the Hero and his Spouse and that the balcony they are supporting is the smallest unit of society—the Family. This they support as long as possible—and even a bit longer. Even when it has become clear that they have had enough and have suffered the tortures of divorce, the division of conjugal property and the awarding of custody of their child—all of which they had hoped to endure with dignity but suffered with indignity. They have already been through the circles of hell of poverty and homelessness and have tried several variations on humiliating relations and solitude. They have already learned to expect nothing from their professions and their unconscious romantic reveries of someone who could be but is not. They have already realized that they have lost something which had never been theirs, since the world around us is so arranged as to make us unfriendly. Even after having recognized all that, they still support the burden for a while, like well-bred caryatides and atlases of society. Finally they let go. And the House collapses.

This is melodrama indeed, stereotyped melodrama. It deals with the effects on the mind of problems such as having nowhere to live, without paying any heed to all the changes pending in Hungary. Amid all the political upheavals, the authors of *As We Do It* seem to be absolutely indifferent to political theatre. They are able to believe that people continue to desire to eat their fill, to go out for the day somewhere, to have a good time, and when in company, they have other things to speak about than the multi-party system. As Spiró and Mási k see it, the dreary, over-intense, jostling social co-tenancy in which we live (and which is represented on stage as the cross-section of a block of houses) sets its marks on our existence, our thinking and our conflicts much more strongly than does the possibility that this might change in the near future. Right now we experience something other than that which—perhaps, possibly—will be. Right now it is as it is.

As We Do It is a melodrama of abortive lives. The social environment in which the characters are set is uninhabitable and they become helpless in their solitude. Spiró's view is a cruelly sincere male one; he has written the whole story impartially from the point of view of the Hero, of his desperation, his disappointment, his craving, his resolution, his weakness. What is indeed melodramatically heroic is the way in which he faces his own soul (a confrontation presumably unbreakable even for him) with his yearning for freedom and for a companion, the intellectual, the child, the clown, the rationalist, and the day-dreamer all in one. He has written the libretto of his own mental household, with all its emotional tumult, harassing Leitmotifs, broken melodies and cruelly repeating ostinatos—all that it needed was music to be composed for it.

János Másik's solution for the music is truly original. Musically, *As We Do It* resembles none of the Hungarian musicals or rock operas of recent times; with its musical idiom and dramaturgy it is perfectly in accord with the book. This it achieves not by amplifying the plot, resolving it in a culinary fashion and making it "singtable", rather it stylizes the plot through shock treatment, stepping up its intensity and expanding it emotionally. Thus when the TV newsreaders and reporters sing the newsreel on the screen, this is more than a stylistic device or a parody. It lifts daily routine into another dimension, in which we live through the depressive, the ridiculous and alienating effect of the politicized, stereotyped existence imposed upon us. This is exactly what *As We Do It* is about.

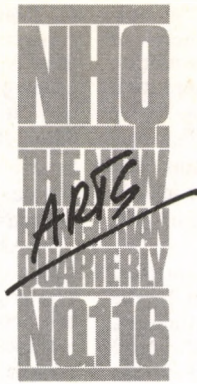
The production recalls Brecht's maxim according to which whatever colour the sets are, the main thing is that they should be grey. Rarely have so many varieties of grey been seen. The energetic direction of László Marton ensures that all the various theatrical elements reinforce one another in a spectacular manner. Marton does not give us a play with a musical accompaniment, he stages life as prepared into a musical play. Accordingly, he occasionally brings the conductor and the piano up on stage (as did Yuri Lubimov in his Budapest production of *Don Giovanni*). The conductor be-

comes one of the protagonists in the performance, intervening in the plot, commanding the ritual and giving the cues. In way of a representative sample of the population, the characters feign the choreography of daily routine in their shabby clothes, in the grey hive of a block of flats. This choreography is an extraordinarily successful invention in the way it transforms natural gestures into stylized movement. Our movement patterns in the street, on a public vehicle or within the few square metres we live in produce an ominous picture of the environmental damages social cohabitation creates.

The two principles are patterns and personalities, types and individuals, models and characters all in one. Géza D. Hegedűs as the Hero is somewhat more likeable, while Erzsébet Kutyölgyi, his Spouse, is somewhat more unpleasant, which follows from the playwright's point of view. Both radiate tension, a typical feature of a damned generation. As does the whole production, both actors emanate desperate rage. In one horrifying scene we see them projected in a nightmare slow-motion picture, weary, shabby and old, as the crowd of the underpass absorbs from their eyes a strange young man—their grown-up son. This nightmare is their life. It is our life.

Tamás Koltai





Baroque and rococo arts and crafts

An exhibition at the Budapest Museum of Arts and Crafts

This spring the Museum of Arts and Crafts showed Baroque and Rococo, as a follow-up to a recent display of High Renaissance and Late Renaissance works.¹ Both anticipate a permanent display which is to be opened in the not too distant future, indeed they virtually serve as a rehearsal. From the Museum's point of view this advance show, as it were, also counts as a major undertaking. In fact a display of the stocks of Arts and Crafts has long been overdue.

Unfortunately, there are few Baroque and Rococo interiors, furnishings or sets of furniture to be found in their original environments in Hungary—be it in chateaux or town houses—nor are there many in specialised collections. Most were destroyed in post-war years, a process that went on until quite recently. So, apart from the Esterházy Collection, the Budapest Museum relies on ad hoc acquisitions.

The Museum has chosen the name "Stylistic Periods in the History of European Arts and Crafts" for its exhibitions series, sticking to the base description. One should also approve that they did not attempt to show modes of living, as others have done without much success in Hungary. Of course, there are different ways in which small objects of use or decoration may be classified. This time the Museum has tried to present ensembles that match well. Consequently, they rightly did not interpret the titles given to the various sections in a too strict or rigid sense; the result is a certain inconsistency to which there cannot be too much of an objection.

The main name refers to styles, the various sections express iconographic and historical conceptual criteria, as for example "The Religious Revival and the Baroque", "Secular Glory—Hero Worship", "Celebrating Sensual Beauty", "Evocation of Transience and Death", "Regency and Rococo Tastes", "Rococo and Religion", etc. To counterpoise this, the programme sheets for the various sections (Augsburg Goldsmith Work, French Baroque and Rococo Furniture, Chinoiserie, Glazed Earthenware of Holics, Caskets, and so on) offer brief summaries of the history of the minor genres and their centres. (These sheets serve as popular precedents for more thorough catalogues, compiled in accordance with the demands of scholars.)

The exhibition starts with church ornaments in the triumphant Baroque style. In this context the situation is just the opposite to what I mentioned about the destruction of secular ensembles. The Catholic and Protestant Churches in Hungary, both in the capital and the provinces, possess lavish treasures of goldsmith works and textiles, but only few of these have reached museums. Apart from a few exquisite chalices, the Museum of Arts and Crafts could only have shown a fairly modest selection of ecclesiastical pieces had they not borrowed items from various churches and other museums. But even the ciboria, monstrances and copes from Győr, Pécs, Szombathely and Sopron left me with a certain sense of something missing. Much more of the sort is available in Hungary. People interested in ecclesiastic art must view the Cathedral Treasures in Esztergom or Eger. And yet some of the loan items on show point beyond the scope of the decorative arts. Antonio Corradini's splendid

¹ NHQ 113

lead Calvary relief (cca 1730) is one of the Museum's gems. It would be a pity to do without it here just because it is an independent piece of sculpture in its own right. Displayed with it are an equestrian statue of King Louis XIV of France, lead figures by Georg Raphael Donner, and another relief, and these are certainly not arts and crafts items. The place of Alessandro Algardi's statue of St Nicholas dated around 1650 is also in the Museum of Fine Arts.

But the relatively modest display of liturgical goldsmith work is amply compensated for by the splendid collection of secular work of that nature. The large bowl depicting the death in the 1652 Battle of Vezekény of Count László Eszterházy has been lent special timeliness by the auctioning by Sotheby's of Geneva, in May 1989, of an equestrian statue of the count, which derives from the same Augsburg workshop and period (without its original base). It had been taken out of Hungary (or possibly lost, together with a part of the country!) around the end of the Great War, but representatives of Hungarian museums at the auction lacked the money needed to acquire the work. Understandably partiality has placed the splendid bowl at the centre of the group given the title of Hero Worship. Alongside a fine selection of works by Augsburg and Vienna masters, the high-quality artistry and craftsmanship of Sebastian Hann of Nagyszeben in Transylvania, as well as Bergmann of Besztercebánya, and Szilassy of Lőcse in Upper Hungary is also on show. It is good to know that the Museum has further reserves of such works which will enable them to enlarge the section for the final exhibition.

Goldsmith work is so to speak the only unbroken line in the exhibition, other art appear mostly in flashes, like the splendid traditional clothes for Hungarian aristocrats that were also part of the Eszterházy Collection: a rare, or indeed, peerless selection of short pelisses, coats and dolmans, including the clothes worn by King John Sobiesky of Poland and the Hungarian royal robes of honour worn by the Emperor Leopold I.

The Renaissance material includes some exquisite hangings, but the tapestries from Brussels, Aubusson and the Flemish and German pieces in the Baroque collection are all the more modest, with two possible exceptions of French wall hangings from around 1700. By way of compensation there is a wide choice of Saxon and Silesian damask covers. The collection of china is of a most uneven standard, including some beautiful early Meissen figurines, but lacking specimens from most of the later Western centres. This need is filled to a certain extent by the rich display of old Vienna porcelain and Holics faience in the last section of the exhibition. French furniture-making is represented by splendid work by A. Ch. Boulle, A. Criaerd, A.F. Delorme, J. Baumhauer, Pierre II Migeon and F.

G. Teuné. Some of the best South German and Austrian pieces are also on show, although here they have obviously made some concessions in keeping in place an earlier set of furniture on display at the Nagytétény Chateau Museum. The finest, 18th century-items of English decorative art have been on display on the second floor of the Museum, and these have not been removed to the ground floor.

As in the case of the textiles, in the glass-ware material too, the absence of items from the great Western centres, principally from Flanders and Murano, is made up for by others from the geographically closer regions of Bavaria, Silesia and Austria. A particularly delightful Bavarian speciality is a set of six double-walled glasses ornamented with leaf gold, dated from around 1730–55.

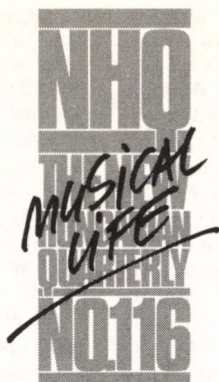
The Baroque collections have carefully maintained an exacting standard. With few exceptions, the pieces on show are not provincial, vernacular or popular. Such, however, attractive they may be, would really be out of keeping in this context. They should be shown at separate, occasional, exhibitions.

Most pieces underwent major restoration. The work of Márta Péter, the main organizer, has been assisted by Szilvia Maros and András Szilágyi, with Piroska Ács, Éva Békési, Emőke László, Vera Varga, Erzsébet Vadászi and Piroska Weiner as assistants.

Although recently made, the show-cases are unfortunately utterly unsuitable for their purpose, but the organizers had to make do with them. Resembling an amateur handyman's job, the large parts of these steel and wooden constructions are of fairly poor quality. The steel parts are painted a dull grey. It is inadmissible to display objects with gilded, silver, porcelain, glass, or any other precious surfaces against an unvarnished wood frame and environment. Precious metals cannot be coupled with a rustic character. The show-cases are not even dust-proof, as there are large splits in them, and another serious trouble is their very placing, which means that the chalices and monstrances are on show (or rather hidden) at knee height (that is to say at stool height). These objects have never been placed in such positions. The minimum height they must be placed at is that of a table. Many delicate glassware and other objects, which once also stood on tables or sideboards, have not fared better. The architectural space has been put to fairly good use, but when mounting the final exhibition, it may perhaps be possible to make more of Ödön Lechner's architecture (difficult though it may be to adjust to it) to achieve a more effective unity.

Miklós Mojzer

Miklós Mojzer is the newly appointed Director of the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts.



Liszt on opera

Franz Liszt: *Sämtliche Schriften* (Collected Writings), ed. Detlef Altenburg. Vol. 5: *Dramaturgische Blätter*, ed. Dorothea Redepenning and Britta Schilling, glossed by Detlef Altenburg, Dorothea Redepenning, and Britta Schilling. Wiesbaden, 1989. Breitkopf & Härtel, 263 pp.

A significant yet controversial part of Liszt's œuvre consists of his writings which range from prefaces of a few pages and short reviews to lengthy articles and complete books. (This does not include his extensive correspondence which, though not without literary merit, considering its purpose does not fall under this category.) Although a collected edition of Liszt's writings was published in six volumes during the composer's lifetime and with his permission (Franz Liszt: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Lina Ramann, Leipzig, 180–83, reprinted Hildesheim and Wiesbaden, 1978), the fact is, however strange it may seem, that up to the present day not even a comprehensive, annotated bibliography has been compiled of all of Liszt's writings and their editions, contemporaneous and authentic, not to speak of the texts themselves, which are still not accessible in their entirety. The average musician and musicologist in most cases is bound to turn to Ramann's collection, which is far from complete and gives pieces originally written in French in a German translation, sometimes with abbreviations or expansions, and certainly in a stylised form. Some of the early writings are relatively easily accessible in the original French in Jean Chantavoine's collected volume *Pages romantiques* (Paris, 1912, new edition prefaced by Serge Gut, Paris, 1986), but contrary to general belief, this is not a complete edition, even where the cycle "Lettres d'un bachelier" is concerned. Apart from the fact that the actual corpus of the writings cannot really be assessed, the other problem springs from the fact that Liszt's, two companions, Marie d'Agoult and Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, took a demonstrable

part in the writing of several of these works. As to the nature and extent of this cooperation, there was a time when Liszt scholars went to the extreme of claiming that apart from his correspondence, Liszt did not set to paper a single line independently and merely provided his name for the works. Although no one now holds with this allegation (which has been principally argued by Emil Haraszti), and indeed, it seems to be increasingly accepted that (with the possible exception of the late re-edition of "Chopin" and "Des Bohémiens..."), even when working jointly, the leading rôle always was Liszt's, it stands to reason that this problem alone makes a modern critical edition of the writings an absolute necessity.

This very difficult and pressing duty has been undertaken by a small team of scholars headed by Detlef Altenburg, and after four years of preparation, sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the Universität-Gesamthochschule-Paderborn (West Germany)) and the province of Burgenland (Austria), they have now launched a historical, critical complete edition under the title *Franz Liszt Sämtliche Schriften*, which they intend to run to nine volumes with the following divisions: 1. Early Writings; 2. Frédéric Chopin; 3. Die Goethe-Stiftung; 4. "Lohengrin" und "Tannhäuser" von Richard Wagner; 5. Dramaturgische Blätter; 6. Aus den Annalen des Fortschritts; 7. Die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn I; 8. Die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn II; 9. Programmes and Miscellaneous Writings—Index.

The volumes are to appear in the order of completion and so the first to reach the shops has

been Volume 5: *Dramaturgische Blätter*, which includes thirteen pieces of differing length on opera, all dating from 1854 (the last being printed on January 1, 1855). The shortest of them ("Beethoven's *Fidelio*") is barely three pages long, while the longest ("Wagner's *Fliegender Holländer*") runs to 46 pages. The composers of the works concerned are also highly different: Weber, Beethoven, Gluck, Mendelssohn, Auber, Meyerbeer, Bellini, Donizetti, Boieldieu, Schubert, and Wagner are the names which feature in the titles, but several articles devote great attention to Rossini's operas as well. At first sight the only links between the articles are that each tackles some opera or other, and that the work in question was staged in Weimar at the time. (An exception to this is the article of January 1, 1855, on *Rheingold*, which was prompted by the recent completion of the score. In actual fact, however, these writings are much more than a random selection of works on music. This has not become clear from the volume *Dramaturgische Blätter* of Lina Ramann's *Gesammelte Schriften*, but the new *Sämtliche Schriften* makes it clearer.

The long paper, given the title "Entstehung" (Genesis) by Altenburg and Redepenning in the section called Commentary, throws light on the genesis of the writings in the volume, Liszt's intentions and the connections between these writings and the composer's other endeavours (as conductor, organiser of the musical scene and even as a composer). It also touches upon the questions of authorship, co-authorship and translator(s), the printing history of the articles and the aim of arranging them into a cycle and how this has been realised. The study bears out the authors' amazingly thorough knowledge of the sources and all the relevant material, and it provides answers to a number of questions that the Ramann edition raises. Some of these are the following:

Can these articles really be considered Liszt's, when they were drafted jointly with Carolyne, in French (all of them presumably translated into German by Peter Cornelius), and none of them have survived in autograph form?—Why did Liszt not give a more detailed analysis of the musical material of the operas that feature in the titles of the articles (with the possible exception of the long piece on *The Flying Dutchman*, which at some points seems to go into minute details); why did he not write more concretely about the music concerned and why did he, instead, repeatedly touch upon overall historical contexts and current issues?—Where did the title *Dramaturgische Blätter* spring from; what justified the inclusion of these actual pieces, in the volume, and why have the editors of the *Sämtliche Schriften* refused to accept as an organising principle either the order of the first appearances of the articles or the order set by Lina Ramann, or again the seemingly logical decision by Ramann to take out the two articles dealing with Wagner and publish them

in a separate volume, under the title "Dramaturgische Blätter II. Abteilung", together with the two earlier, long studies on *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*?

The most effective answer the authors of the introduction provided to the first question is a quotation from one of Liszt's letters. On March 18, 1854, Liszt wrote to Franz Brendel, the editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*: "I enclose an article which is intended for your journal. *Euryanthe*, which I will conduct here tomorrow, serves as the occasion for it—but it tackles a more comprehensive question which to a certain extent I feel obliged to 'set astir' from Weimar . . . My name can be openly given in all its five letters, as I am fully ready to represent my opinion."

This quotation clearly demonstrates the essentially natural yet still vexed fact that Liszt considered the articles which appeared under his own name as expressing his own opinion, and also that the opera in question only served him for a starting-point, as a pretext to elaborate on his thoughts of the time. The article on Weber's *Euryanthe* (the opening piece in the *Dramaturgische Blätter*), for instance, discusses its fiasco at the première in relationship with its anticipatory elements, only to reach the conclusion that it is the duty of court theatres to support the really valuable (as against municipal theatres which pursue daily box-office success). To achieve this goal, a deliberate programme plan should be worked out, ensuring a place to (1) old masterpieces, (2) all the valuable contemporary schools, and (3) unpublished works by the youngest gifted composers. And so, though the article includes a few apt musical observations regarding Weber's operas, in fact it speaks mainly of the principles according to which Liszt had drawn up the repertory of the Weimar theatre.

The situation is similar (even though in different proportions) in the case of the other articles as well. In the chapter on the genesis of the writings the editors give brief summaries of some of the major factors concerning their inspiration and publication. First, Liszt wished to keep Weimar, a small town with a long-standing tradition, as a centre of the renaissance of German art. As part of this ambition, the renewal of music obviously had a special point for him. As far as stage music was concerned, he recognised that Wagner had opened a new period in the development of German opera, and as a court conductor in Weimar, he wished to stand by it. Part of the preliminary work was the publishing of his series of articles on stage music. Secondly, Liszt the composer wished to realise the same ideas in symphonic music as Wagner wished to do on the stage—a union of poetry and music. So his writings that supported the new opera—which he wrote by and large at the same time as completing his first nine symphonic poems and while working on the *Faust* Symphony—indirectly served Liszt's own aims as a composer as well.

Thirdly (and this is less obvious at first sight, so that the editors have done a useful job in turning attention to it), Liszt was replying in these articles to Wagner's book, *Oper und Drama* (1851). Instead of a direct refutation, he was elaborating his own point of view on the historical development of opera and contemporary schools, a view that differed radically from Wagner's. According to Wagner, Gluck's reform of the opera (after a few not really successful experiments) had no real continuation, and ever since Rossini, opera had been at a standstill, with the bedrock touched by Berlioz and Meyerbeer; a renewal may start out from Beethoven's Ninth, and, naturally, reach its goal in Wagner's music. Liszt, on the other hand, shows in his series of articles how the various composers and schools since Gluck had contributed to the development of opera, which has led continuously, from the sentimental, bel canto Italian style school, through the French building on affect and situation, and the still young German School based on character portrayal, to Wagner's music, which unites all these strands, raising them to a higher level.

This also provides an answer to the second question I have raised: why the concrete musical analysis of the works in question is overshadowed in these articles by the discussion of the historical position of the opera and its composer, and its relevance to the present.

The editors answer the third question, that of the title of *Dramaturgische Blätter* and the order of articles in it, by a quotation from Richard Pohl's *Reisebriefe aus Thüringen*, published in 1854: "In addition, this winter Liszt has undertaken to publish a series of longer and shorter articles in the feuilleton of the *Weimarer Zeitung* about those works by older composers which had been performed during the season in Weimar. After being divested of their local colour, and with many extensions by the author, some of these have been taken over by the *Neue Zeitschrift*. All the articles in the *Weimarer Zeitung* will be later collected and published as 'Dramaturgische Blätter'. This is good news for those who cannot get hold of the *Weimarer Zeitung* itself." During the 1850s no such collected volume was published, and Ramann's *Gesammelte Schriften* only appeared two decades later. It is, however, strange that Ramann, while using the title *Dramaturgische Blätter* for the volume, disregarded the arrangement and order which Liszt himself had set when he rewrote the seven articles that had appeared in the *Weimarer Zeitung*, and, supplementing them with seven more writings, had them published as a series for the wider public of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Yet Liszt, as becomes clear from the correspondence he had with the editor of the periodical, attached significance to the order of publication he worked out, which slightly differed from the order in which the Weimar newspaper had carried the articles. He also wanted the articles to

appear in quick succession, obviously to avoid disrupting the train of thought running through them and to allow the broader concept to prevail.

So the *Sämtliche Schriften* presents the texts as they appeared in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, adhering to the original order as well. But the chapter "Überlieferung" in the Commentary gives all the major contemporaneous sources (including some early re-editions and translations), up to and including Ramann's edition, with precise bibliographical data. Special analyses are devoted to the versions in the *Weimarer Zeitung*, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, the only original French publication, the *Constitutionnel*, and also to Ramann's text. If someone does not wish to use the variant in the *Neue Zeitschrift*, there is no problem as the diacritical marks in the text of the articles refer to differences and supplements existing in the other authentic sources; these are not really disturbing and allow a continuous reading and at the same time enable the reader to find the different text variants easily in the chapter "Lesarten und Varianten" (Readings and Variants, by Schilling) in the Commentary. The editors have even seen to compiling a special list of printing errors in the sources of the texts reproduced in the volume, which they have corrected. This has not been a superfluous effort at all, as by now many people are unable to differentiate between errors and the use of an obsolete or specific style, for which there are many examples in Liszt's texts.

The comments on the texts (in the chapter "Erläuterungen" in the Commentary) reflect the three editors' thorough grounding. Liszt's unique musical reading was coupled with an imposing general knowledge and range of interests, which make commenting on his articles a far from easy task, as they cover extremely divergent subjects. As an extreme example, whoever would be familiar today with the Ganal process ("Procédé Ganal") to which Liszt refers in the German text of his *Eury-anthe* article when he says one should not wait with the staging of new works until they become outdated and take them up as a novelty, a dolled up mummy. Being unfamiliar with the word "Ganal," Ramann took it for a printing error and substituted the term "banales Verfahren" (banal process) for it. The editors of the *Sämtliche Schriften* have tracked down the fact that Liszt meant a process of conserving and mummification used by the French physician Nicolas Gannal (1791—1852), which enjoyed great popularity in the composer's time. (Note to 6,28 on p. 205). To take a more serious example of the wide variety of the comments: in the article "Donizettis Favoritin," Liszt disapproved of the German way which rejects from the outset everything coming from abroad and even accepts only a certain part of the German output, which however it fetishises at the expense of other, valuable novelties: "They set [these composers] on a fictive pedes-

tal like the Pillars of Hercules, and by this they call for a natural reaction against them, since Art in its ceaseless progress knows no termini and nobody can call out to the streams of the spirit: 'So far and no further!' The comments (to 53,39–54,33 and 54,21, on p.234–5) explain that here Liszt expressed an implied criticism of the diatribes against Wagner in Joachim Raff's book *Die Wagnerfrage* (1854) and the reviews in the *Grenzbote* and other German newspapers. The mention of the "Grenzgötter" (termini) in connection with the Pillars of Hercules bearing the inscription "Non plus ultra" can thus also be considered a witty pun. So after reading the articles it is well worth glancing through the comments even if one is not aware of any unsolved question, as the background information provided by the editors can add further light on the unique breadth of Liszt's writings and the scope of his references.

The Commentary devotes a special chapter to the reception of the articles and their effect ("Wirkung," by Altenburg and Schilling). It starts out with an examination of the fairly reserved reaction of Wagner's, in whose interest Liszt wrote the whole series. Liszt stood up for the music of Wagner but distanced himself from his theoretical notions to a certain extent; perhaps just because of this, he never showed the articles to Wagner before publication. The chapter also reviews the not negligible influence of the *Dramaturgische Blätter* on Liszt's own circle, the New German School, and the criticism the series drew from the adherents of the opposition camp. It examines the concrete effect the articles had on theatrical organisation, billing and the education of actors, which constituted one of the central issues of the series, but in which respect, at least during the 1850s, they brought no real, practical results.

One of the most interesting sections in the chapter on the reception of the series deals with the dissemination of the articles abroad. Here it is worthy of particular attention that, thanks to Serov, several of Liszt's articles on opera appeared in Russian translation in 1856, and they played a

clarificatory role in the theoretical debates around the Russian national opera. It would perhaps be not far from the mark to attach some significance to these articles in the very good relations which later developed between Liszt and the progressive Russian composers. Thanks to William Mason and his brothers, some of Liszt's relevant articles were available in English translation in America even sooner than in Russian, immediately after the first appearance of the writings.

The chapter on reception is by no means a complete one, but it will certainly prompt scholars to try and assess the possible effect of the *Dramaturgische Blätter* in their own country as well.

The newly published first volume of the *Sämtliche Schriften* meets every requirement not only in content but in its get-up as well. With a model typographical design and beautifully printed, it is a volume easy to handle, with the commentaries to the numbered Liszt texts easily traceable. My only critical comment concerns the plan of the series as a whole; I am not happy about the absence of an index in each individual volume, with a summarising index available only in the last volume. This might be reasonable for economic reasons, but the lack of an index in each volume is most uncomfortable practically, the more so as the series does not appear all at once (even though it is expected to come out in relatively quick succession).

Apart from this, and judging from the first volume, the *Sämtliche Schriften* is undoubtedly one of the most significant and successful projects in Liszt research in recent years. Its scholarly thoroughness, exemplary team work, and the many-sided and at the same time logical and easily accessible presentation of the material serves as a model for similar, large undertakings.

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Bartók in Britain

Malcolm Gillies: *Bartók in Britain. A Guided Tour*. Clarendon Press Oxford, 1989, xvi, 168 pp.

During the first decades after Bartók's death, research into the composer's oeuvre, including the mapping out of his course of life was considered a Hungarian affair. Much more reliable information is available on Bartók's life and work than on any other personality in the history of 20th century music; this has been principally due to János Demény, a one-man Bartók Archive, and the Belgian Denijs Dille, who has been living in Hungary since 1961 and may be considered a honorary Hungarian. Demény, without ever crossing the borders of Hungary, has published a lavishly-documented chronicle on Bartók in four instalments (1954, 1955, 1959 and 1962), which makes use of information made available abroad. From its nature, the work, despite the rich flow of information it provides, could not be complete; this has raised the demand, after the first, extensive summary, for national publications that draw on local research as well, the product of deeply-bored wells, so to say.

The pioneering work in this respect was carried out by Werner Fuchs, a descendant of the 18th century musician-diplomat Gottfried van Swieten, who for several years was Swiss ambassador to Budapest and after retiring from the diplomatic service, in 1973 published a documented volume in two languages (*Béla Bartók et la Suisse—Béla Bartók und die Schweiz*). Yves Lenoir's three volumes, entitled *Vie et Oeuvre de Béla Bartók aux États-Unis d'Amérique (1940—1945)* was published in 1976, followed by a one-volume abridgement of the work in 1986, *Folklore et transcendance dans l'oeuvre américaine de Béla Bartók (1940—1945)*. A collection of documents by Tibor Tallián, published — thus far only in Hungarian — in 1988: *Bartók fogadtatása Amerikában, 1940—1945* (Bartók's Reception in America, 1940—1945) is an important supplement to Lenoir's work.

The latest volume in this vein has come from Malcolm Gillies, a lecturer in music at Melbourne University in Australia. A slim volume, it is weighty as far as its contents is concerned. Mr. Gillies's scholarly interest in Bartók will not be confined to this book. When he recently spent a few weeks in Budapest, collecting material, his Hungarian proved good enough to study Hungarian documents that have not yet been published, or if published, not in any of the leading languages. A true evaluation of his accomplishment can only come from one who has ever tried to learn Hungarian quickly, a language so different from the Indo-European language family. Gillies has undertaken this intellectual investment not for the sake of a single work, as his, the second, English-language

selection of Bartók's letters is already in progress (the first volume, *Béla Bartók Letters*, was edited by János Demény in 1971 and has long been out of print); he is also the editor of another project to be published in the near future under the title *Bartók Companion* (which may have been modelled on György Kroó's *A Guide to Bartók*, which appeared in Hungarian in 1971, followed by an English translation in 1974.)

Mr Gillies has scoured an amazingly rich set of source material in family archives, in the BBC's files; the British press and musical periodicals, a multitude of special books whose Bartók references had never before been taken into consideration and, naturally, the Budapest Bartók Archives, to explore every moment of Bartók's stay in Britain. A formal sign of the real extent of his collection of material are the 766 footnotes to the 152 pages of text, and the four pages of a select bibliography, including all the books and studies which have not yet been put to use by Bartók scholars. Some of the footnotes refer to data taken from some ten press reports on Bartók. (A minor blemish is that the notes, documents collected and published in Hungarian by János Demény are referred to in eight cases without giving the source, which leaves the reader with the impression that the author also waded through oceans of Hungarian press reports to reveal Bartók's British connections.)

Bartók in Britain attempts a fresh look at Bartók, not in a generalized, full-frontal assault upon his life, but in a depth study into one of its more representative, geographically determined corners," states the author on the first, unnumbered page of the Prologue. And on Page vi of the same Prologue, he says of his method: "Beyond Bartók and Britain, however, this book has no sustained themes. The tour is packaged — the facts of history have seen to that — but not for any purpose of academic neatness or moral injunction."

The first stopover on this guided tour is of course Manchester, the city in which English audiences first heard Bartók the composer and pianist. The Hallé Orchestra was then conducted by the Hungarian-born Hans (János) Richter; at the end of June 1903, he heard Bartók play his latest work on the piano, the symphonic poem *Kossuth*, then still in an unorchestrated form, and he offered to give the first performance in Manchester. That same night Bartók also played the solo part of Liszt's *Spanish Rhapsody* in Busoni's orchestration, a solo piece by the German-born Robert Volkmann, who had settled in Hungary, "Variations on a Theme by Handel" and, as an encore, the Scherzo

movement of his own cycle *Four Piano Pieces* of 1903 (Gillies does not give this last title). *Kossuth* was the first orchestral work of Bartók's to be performed abroad, and the composer's programme notes the first publication by Bartók to appear in a foreign language.

In point of fact, both the audience and the press appreciated the pianist rather than the composer. The day after the concert, the *Daily Dispatch* carried a review, signed S. B.

"One cannot allow such a cacophonous display as is presented in the 'Battle' section to pass without a word of remonstrance and regret. Take all the demons of Berlioz, Strauss and Elgar put together, and multiplied 'ad infinitum'; over that crude mixture, imagine a minor version of the Austrian hymn played now on the Contra bassoon, and then on trumpets and trombones. All of course fortissimo. The result would be painful, if it were not so laughable." (p. 7)

In the years to come, cacophony remained a recurring label that was to be stuck ever so often to Bartók's music by cloth-eared critics.

However, the critic of the *Daily Dispatch* adopted another tone when he turned to describing Bartók the pianist: "It is a pleasure to be able to compliment Mr Bartók sincerely and unreservedly upon his talents as a pianist . . . Mr Bartók displayed a very admirable technique, a beautiful, smooth touch, and best of all, great *expressive powers*." (Quoted by János Demény in *Documenta Bartókiana* 1, Budapest, 1964, p. 62)

Bartók's début in Britain also included an event of minor significance, when upon the recommendation of Ernst von Dohnányi, he played the piano as a soloist at the Ladies' Concerts cycle in Manchester, on the afternoon of February 20. In 1905, Richter contracted Bartók as soloist for Liszt's *Totentanz* but he did not wish to have anything to do with the composer's own works. Gillies is justified in entitling his section on these first steps in Britain as *A False Start*, for the Manchester début brought no national response, and Richter, despite his earlier promise, did not introduce Bartók to the London musical world.

However, the next time Bartók crossed the Channel, in 1922, he was received by a general public which had been adequately prepared for the reception of his works. During the preceding years, several critics had disussed his music, the most prestigious of them unquestionably being the Greek critic M. D. Calvocoressi, who had lived in Paris before settling after the Great War in Britain. Surprising as it may sound, progressive music teachers started to teach Bartók's easy piano pieces soon after the appearance of the scores (p. 16), well in advance of their Hungarian colleagues in doing so. (I wonder how they managed to obtain the scores?) Even more surprisingly, in 1914 Henry Wood planned the performance of no less than

three orchestral works by Bartók, who at the time was still practically unknown in London, for the summer/early autumn season of his Promenade Concerts (Rhapsody, op. 1, Suite, op. 3, *Two Pictures*, op. 10). The significance of these three London performances would have been further increased through the great popularity of the Proms and through the actual intention of introducing three new works by a single composer, for it was unprecedented in the history of the Promenade Concerts to bill three works unknown in London by a contemporary foreign composer.

The Great War broke out in August 1914 and the hostile parties mutually banned the music of the enemy. It was little short of a miracle that Wood succeeded in overcoming the grudges of some members of his orchestra and on September 1 he conducted one of the three Bartók works: the Suite op. 3. Then came the years when the music of Beethoven was acceptable in Tsarist Russia only by adding the Dutch particle *van*, while Maurice Ravel demanded in vain the reintroduction of the music of Bartók and Schoenberg to the French concert platforms and honourable Hungarian music critics equally fought in vain for the music of French composers.

Towards the end of the war and more so during the first years of peace, as Europe was slowly recovering from the trauma, there was steady pressure from Britons (scholarly writers on music such as Cecil Gray, Philip Heseltine and Calvocoressi, alongside a whole range of other notable individuals) to pave the way for Bartók in Britain.

Thanks to Gray and Heseltine, by March 10 1922, when Bartók arrived in London, several of his important articles had already been published in the music periodicals, the *Chesterian* and the *Sackbut*. Bartók stayed in Britain for less than a month (he went on to Paris on April 4), but these few days were packed with so many important events that Mr Gillies has been fully justified in devoting a lengthy chapter to chronicling them (1922: *In the Limelight*, pp. 30–49). Indeed, the year 1922 was a real turning point in Bartók's relationship with British music. This chapter bears out in minute detail how important Bartók's personal presence and the series of performances of his works were. His stay in Britain was significant on the concert scene and in the press; his presence also turned into a social event (with parties and receptions, the forming of new relationships and the like). These new acquaintanceships led to various events, as for instance the presumable link between the reception in Bartók's honour given by the noted singer, Dorothy Moulton on March 19 (p. 35) and Dorothy Moulton's concerts in Budapest in May and October 1923. I take it that the singer had been invited on Bartók's recommendation to appear on the occasion of the first Hungarian performance of Schoenberg's second string quartet (May 17 1923). She also took advantage of her visit to sing works

by British composers who at the time were not yet known in Hungary (Arnold Bax, Gustav Holst, Cyril Scott).

The consequences of the tour included a commission by the editor Arthur Eaglefield for Bartók to write the Hungarian entries for the *Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians*, which was published in 1924: "... the responsibility for all articles on Hungarian subjects ..." (p. 44). Let me add to this information that Bartók in the end shared the responsibility with Zoltán Kodály, who wrote the entries on Ernst von (Ernő) Dohnányi, Theodor (Tivadar) Szántó and Béla Bartók: By so doing, Bartók offered Kodály (whose name became more slowly known in Britain) the opportunity for his first English-language written publication; he also ensured that the dictionary should give the most authentic picture possible on himself.

Here I would recommend breaking the continuity of the volume by following the chronicle of the three concert tours of Britain — in 1922 and two in 1923 — by reading Part II, which carries the title of *Two Relationships* (pp. 115–44). Here Gillies gives such a detailed description of Bartók's relationship with Cecil Gray and Philip Heseltine, and the Hungarian Arányi sisters who settled in Britain (violinists Adila and Jelly, and pianist Hortense), and throws such a sharp light on the run of success of these two years and the role these people played in it, that I feel it no exaggeration to describe it as a matchless achievement. In these pages he has condensed a dizzying mass of so far completely unknown source material.

The chapters between provide extensive proof of the decisive role Britain played as a base in Bartók's life as a composer. The importance of this was further heightened after Hitler's rise to power in 1933, as this meant that his other important base, Germany, was practically, if not completely eliminated as a means for the transmission of Bartók's music. A book review cannot undertake the discussion of every little detail. The markedly significant role played by the BBC seems to be obvious (*Bartók over Britain*, pp. 66–95). "On 6 November 1924 his *Rumanian Folk Dances* (1915) were broadcast by the BBC, and every year since then at least one of his works has been included in its programmes." (p. 67) The BBC broadcast a series of public concerts featuring Bartók's works, frequently inviting the composer as a pianist as well.

It is a pity that Gillies devotes no more space to the Budapest concert by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, under Sir Adrian Boult, on April 24 1936. The programme included Bartók's *Four Pieces for Orchestra* (which had not been played in Budapest since its first performance on February 9 1922). A policy to include a British work in every concert made the performance of Bartók's work questionable. In the end, it remained in the programme, but Edward Clark, a former pupil of

Schoenberg's and programme planner for BBC from 1926, resigned. I do not understand the gist of the conflict, as alongside Bartók, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, in Budapest performed works by two British composers (Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* for Strings and Arnold Bax's *Tin-tagel*). If anybody, it was Boult who had made a sacrifice in reserving the whole first part of his inaugural concert in Budapest to contemporary works that were scarcely, if at all, known. The second half of the evening was devoted to Beethoven's Fifth and excerpts from Wagner. But I wonder why Clark felt the need to resign?

After this clash, there was a certain estrangement between the BBC and Bartók and the BBC no longer took the initiative. According to a BBC internal memorandum:

"This is surely another instance of artists trying to make their visits to this country dependent on what we can promise them in the way of engagement. We feel that we could only consider booking Bartók if he were already over here. ..." (p. 91) But when assessing all the various pieces of information, it can hardly be questioned that even during the Clark era, the BBC did no more for the propagation of Schoenberg or Webern than it did for Bartók; nor did this attitude change from the second half of 1936 onwards."

The chapter *Bartók at large* (pp. 96–111), which ends with the composer's last trip to Britain in 1938, calls for many amendments. Although I appreciate that the emphasis here falls on Bartók's personal appearances and documented relationships, no mentions is made, for example, of the more than twenty performances I know of in Britain of Bartók's five string quartets dating from before 1938. (They were performed by the Budapest Quartet, the Hungarian Quartet, the New Hungarian Quartet, the Harthouse Quartet, the Kolisch Quartet, the MacNaughton Quartet, the Pro Arte Quartet and the Rothschild Quartet.) These concerts, however, clearly testify to the continuous presence of Bartók's chamber music in the United Kingdom.

A considerable part of this chapter (pp. 99–106) deals with Bartók's Glasgow connections. It is really touching that a young pianist, Eric Christolm, who in 1929, at the age of 25, founded the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music in Glasgow, and whose letters attempting to contact the composer were repeatedly left unanswered, should insist stubbornly and enthusiastically on setting up a Bartók recital. They finally yielded fruit when Bartók gave a recital for the Active Society on February the 29th of 1932 and returned to the city in 1933. An important precursor for all this had been Christolm performing Bartók's First Piano Concerto, with piano accompaniment in place of an orchestra, in 1929 (p. 100). I should add here that apart from the composer

himself, no one before had ventured to perform this work. And let me also add that on January 21 1931, Chrisholm and the violinist Edward Dennis performed Bartók's Sonata No. 2 for violin and piano, another work which few pianists, except Bartók himself, had taken on in performance. (The programme for the evening is also worth mentioning: alongside Bartók's Sonata, it included Kodály's Sonata for Cello and Piano, op. 4. with Basil Hogarth playing the cello and Chrisholm the piano, Pijper's Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1. Van Dieren's Sonatina Tyorica for violin and piano, and Schoenberg's Three Little Piano Pieces, op. 11. See *The Musical Times*, March 1931. p. 266.

Bartók's last visit to Britain took place in June 1938, when he attended an ISCM festival and performed, with his wife and two English musicians, his Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion. Mr Gillies is able to say something new on this farewell visit as well. Organized by Boosey and Hawkes, Bartók's new publishers, the composer played 15 movements from his *Microcosmos* (on June 20), and he also played excerpts from the same cycle at a party (on June 22).

In the *Epilogue* (pp. 145-52), Gillies gives a summary of everything he considers to be of importance regarding Bartók's relationship with Britain up to his death in September 1945. This is the sketchiest and least worked out part of the work. Compositions by Bartók were regularly performed

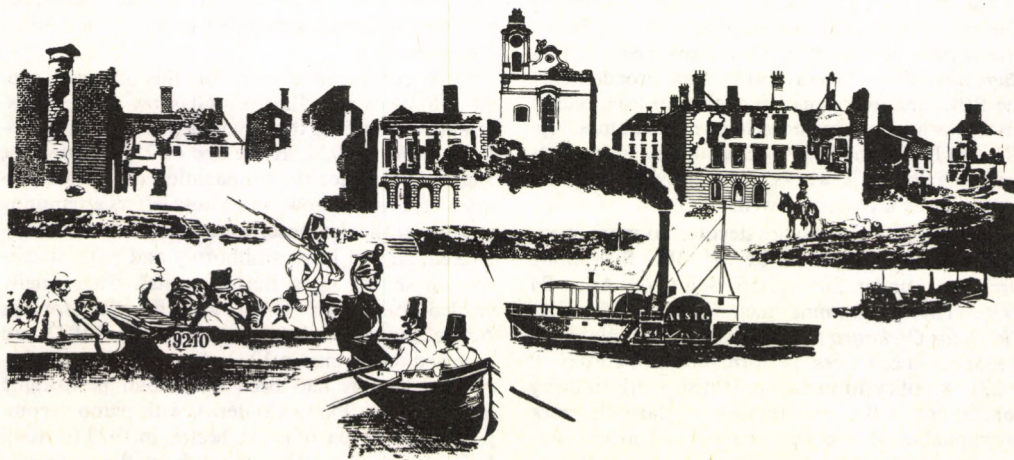
at the concerts mounted by Boosey and Hawkes in the Wigmore Hall in wark-time London. The most important bases were the BBC and the publishers. Valuable articles appeared in the musical periodicals on the scores of Bartók works published in London (*Music and Letters*, *Music Review*). The thorough reviews by Gerald Abraham, Eric Blom, Mosco Carner and others, can justly be placed alongside the early analyses by Calvocoressi, Gray and Heseltine. All this is scarcely mentioned, if at all, in the volume.

Finally, let me mention what I feel to be a considerable lack: Frederick Delius was the first British musician to have formed a personal friendship with Bartók after they met in 1910. Despite the fact that this friendship is documented in several letters by Bartók and an article he wrote on Delius, it is only touched upon in this work.

Notwithstanding my occasional reservations, Bartók scholars can rely on Malcolm Gillies's book as a seminal work with a profusion of new information and abounding in new points of view.

János Breuer

János Breuer's special field is 20th century Hungarian music and its international connections.



Romans and Avars near Lake Balaton

In the history of Transdanubia Keszthely-Fenékpuszta as a site of excavations is relevant to every century of the late Roman and the migration period. The finds discovered there (several unique jewels and liturgical objects among them), the settlement, the graves, the fortification and mounds have for decades been considered of paramount importance in research on the history of those periods, often giving rise to fierce dispute. The antecedents of the late Roman settlement of the 4th century A.D. and its character are just as controversial as is the supposition that Theodoric the Great, King of the Ostrogoths, was born in the Roman fort there around the year 453. The place was perhaps occupied also by the Emperor Avitus when, in the mid-5th century, he tried to recapture the province of Pannonia Prima from the successors of Attila the Hun. In the 6th and 7th centuries the neighbourhood was densely populated: yet we know precious little about the composition, origin and specific development of the populace of the Avar period. Whether those inhabitants who preserved late Roman characteristics in their clothing and jewelry were remnants of the Roman population, or descendants of people whom the Avars had abducted from the south, is still undecided. What is certain is that the region was continually inhabited from the late Roman period up to the time of the Magyar Conquest (9th-10th centuries). But during the 9th century, in the Carolingian era, it was Zalavár, a nearby place to the west, that came to play a more important role. And after the Magyar Conquest, the fortress falling more and more into ruin proved, precisely because of its size, unsuitable for the new conquerors.

The exceptional historical and archaeological

significance of the relatively small area, the environment of Fenékpuszta, is explained by remarkable geographical circumstances. Fenékpuszta is situated west of the present Lake Balaton, on what was in the first millennium a headland surrounded by the lake itself in the east and south and by the waters of Little Balaton in the west. Overland communication was possible only towards the north. This route was barred by an earthwork 4 to 5 metres high. These circumstances favoured settlement on the peninsula at a time when there was no security or peaceful life and people were under continuous threat of marauders. Such was the case at the time of the great migrations and in the Avar period. The region is on the fringe of Avar-inhabited territory. Thus, for five centuries, the peninsula was an almost unparalleled place of retreat, a constantly and densely populated area preserving an abundance of finds. That the location was favourable for defence was realised by the Romans. In the increasingly uncertain situation towards the end of the 4th century, the military authorities occupied a large quadrilateral fortification (292 by 270 metres) erected at the south end of the peninsula. The walls of the fortress (2.7 metres thick and 6 to 8 metres high) sheltered provisions and other military supplies of vital importance. Beef-cattle and grain supply were not only stored but also processed in the fortress. Agricultural iron implements were made for the neighbours who, if in danger, could find shelter behind the walls of the practically unapproachable fort.

The excavations, which had already begun on a large scale towards the end of the 19th century, have revealed hundreds of graves. Alas, no proper documentation has come down to us: what has been left is a heap of hardly definable finds. Fortunately, however, the excavations which resumed in recent decades still bring to light graves facilitating the classification of old finds. Such a section of a graveyard has been published by Robert Müller. The bodies were buried there in the 6th-7th centuries.

The Fenékpusztá headland was not uninhabited in the 1st to 3rd centuries either, although in this more peaceful period it was not as important as at later times. A recent discovery has furnished valuable information on the beginnings of Roman colonisation. Using photographs Müller established, at the southern end of the peninsula, a regular rectangle of an entrenched area which is reminiscent, in its dimensions and in its form, of early Roman auxiliary forts. In the interior of Pannonia military posts could have existed only in the first decades of provincial organisation. From the end of the 1st century A.D. onwards the legions were stationed in frontier camps along the Danube and the interior posts in the province were gradually abandoned. If it proves true that the rectangular network of trenches in Fenékpusztá really constituted a Roman camp, it will not only shed light on the beginnings of the Roman colonisation of the region but will be of importance for research into early Roman military occupation. Verification, however, will not be easy: during the early part of the Roman era the water level of Lake Balaton and its environment was far lower than it is today. Excavation work is thus hindered by the high watertable.

Müller, Róbert: "Megjegyzések Fenékpusztá történetéhez" (A propos the history of Fenékpusztá). *Zalai Múzeum* 1, 1987 (1988), pp. 105–122.

Endre Tóth

Matthias Corvinus' archbishop as a patron of art

The élite of the Renaissance in Hungary was made up of humanists who, educated mostly at universities in Italy in the first place, entered the service of King Matthias and were ultimately appointed bishop or archbishop of a diocese or archdiocese. And there, besides pursuing literary activity in Latin, eagerly open to new ideas, and following the example of King Matthias, they became also patrons of the arts, playing a considerable role in the cultivation of the new style in Hungary. The best-known of these patrons of art is the poet Janus Pannonius (1434–1472), Bishop of Pécs, but Péter Váradi (from about 1450 to 1503), Archbishop of Kalocsa, can also be counted among them. Data on his construction projects, on buildings now in ruins, and fragments of Renaissance stone-carvings, have been collected by Alice Horváth in a first attempt to sketch the portrait of this Renaissance patron.

Péter Váradi, as well as Janus Pannonius, grew up in the Nagyvárad episcopal court of the Nestor of Hungarian humanists, János Vitéz, and their lives have many similar features, although these three clerics belonged to different generations.

They took an active part in diplomacy for King Matthias, but then all three of them came into conflict with their king's expansionist velleities, and finally they were either imprisoned or chose to flee. Posterity remembers chiefly their literary activity. Their writings were published either by themselves or by contemporaries. Thus the poems of Janus Pannonius were assembled, upon instructions from King Matthias, by Péter Váradi who, just like János Vitéz, left behind a book of epistles, containing 131 letters describing the everyday life of a cultured patron of art of the clergy.

Péter Váradi had buildings erected in several places, thus also in Buda, but his most important work was the construction of the stronghold of Bács on the left bank of the Danube. The aim was defense against the Turks. This medieval Castle, somewhat the worse for wear, is still in existence, and the excavations conducted in the 19th century brought to the surface many stone fragments. As on most of the Hungarian building projects carried out at the end of the 15th century, here as well it is possible to see the coexistence of late Gothic and Renaissance stylistic elements. Thus, for example, in one of the corner turrets, a chapel was built with a reticular vault, and probably the interior space of this or the balustrade of the contiguous palace wing was decorated with a Renaissance baluster with fruit-garlanded string ornaments on its columns. Besides a number of fragments there has also remained intact a baluster column on which the ornamentations surround Péter Váradi's coat of arms. (It is now on display in the Hungarian National Gallery.) In addition to the fragments of the Renaissance stone-carvings ornamenting other parts of the building, there is also a cistern, the technical execution of which is the equal of the best Italy produced at the time. The author mentions also those stylistic connections which link the Hungarian monuments to Italy, emphasising the significance of the intermediate role played by Dalmatia. And finally she enumerates those minor Hungarian patrons who, while at Péter Váradi's court, became acquainted with Renaissance art and, becoming patrons of this style themselves, later used it on their own constructions.

Horváth, Alice: "Egy magyar humanista: Váradi Péter építkezései. (15. századi építészeti központ Dél-Magyarországon)" (A Hungarian Humanist: Constructions of Péter Váradi. (A Centre of 15th-Century Architectural Style in Southern Hungary)). *Művészettörténeti Értesítő*, 1987 pp. 54–85.

Géza Galavich

Sacred sites in Budapest

In every landscape there are places where the configurations of the ground, the features of natural scenery create a certain numinosity. The Mediter-

anean area provides many examples of sacred mountains and islands. The historian Gábor Klaniczay, who deals with the medieval veneration of saints and Hungarians kings of the House of Árpád as a dynasty of saints, discusses such places within present day Budapest.

Already in the 4th century B.C., the foot of Gellért Hill, on the right bank of the Danube was sacred to the Celts, who there worshipped a supreme deity called Tuath. A ford was near by, and there were therapeutic hot springs as well.

The place of worship was abandoned for almost fifteen hundred years after the Celts. The Romans venerated the river itself. The hill acquired religious significance owing to the fact that, during the pagan revolt in 1047, St Gerhardus (Gellért), of Venetian origin, bishop to the first Hungarian King St Stephen, died a martyr's death there. The earliest descriptions of his martyrdom still mention his being stoned to death, but later records say that he was thrown off the hill. Gábor Klaniczay ventures the opinion that this change must have been due to the fact that in the first half of the 13th century a church was built in honour of St Gerhardus on the scene of his death. The church possessed no relics of its own from the holy bishop, since his dead body had been taken to Italy. But legend attributed to the very rocks of the hill the character of relics related to the bishop's martyrdom. At that time Buda and Pest were growing fast and all this must have increased popular sensitivity for sacral connections.

Margaret Island is the embodiment of the sacred island in Budapest. In 1241, at the time of the Tartar invasion of Hungary, King Béla IV committed his daughter to be born, Margaret, to God's service by way of appeasement. The little girl, already at the age of three, was sent to a nunnery. It was for her that between 1246 and 1252 the Dominican nunnery was built in the island, where St Michael's Premonstratensian priory had stood earlier. The island provided an opportunity for cloistered seclusion but King Béla IV also fortified and developed Buda and Pest, so that a century later Buda became the country's capital city. The royal family cloister thus added to the splendour of the royal seat. The author points out that this very period witnessed the appearance, all over Central Europe, of pious queens and royal princesses who guided important political activity among aristocratic companions in cloistered life and virtually developed a power of sacral import opposing the royal court. There was good reason why Béla IV made peace with his rebel son, Margaret's brother and "junior king" Stephen V, precisely in Margaret's nunnery in 1265. In 1270, after Margaret's death, the procedure of canonisation was initiated—which, however, was to come to a successful conclusion only centuries after. Pilgrims followed. It was then that the earlier Hare Island was renamed St Margaret Island.

The Osmanli Turkish conquest and the occupation of Buda (1541) interrupted the sacral history of Margaret Island: the nuns fled, taking the relics of Margaret with them. None of this could happen in regard to Gellért Hill. According to Klaniczay, the Turks did not know what to do with the "feminine holy island", but turned the "masculine holy mountain" into a cultic centre of their own. When taking Buda in 1541, the Turks erected a wooden fortress on the hilltop as well as a sanctuary in honour of Gürz-Elias, a Bosnian-Turkish martyr of the 15th century. He was a Bosnian captain in the Turkish army and was killed in a battle against Serbs and Magyars in the 1480s. His relics were taken to Buda, in order to establish a new cult of a military character. Later on legends grew about his person to the effect that he had allegedly fought at the head of Turkish troops in Hungarian territory as well. The mosque built on the hilltop—as certain Turkish authors supposed—expressed, as it were, the supremacy of Islam over the Gellért Chapel at the foot of the hill.

In the second half of the 17th century a new element was added to the fame of Gellért Hill. In 1656, for the first time, a Debrecen Calvinist academic dissertation argued that, "according to popular belief", witches from all over the country, "accompanied by a multitude of men and women, holding banners and symbols raised high, with drums rolling and trumpets blaring, to St Gellért Hill near Buda and junket and dance there". The proceedings of witchcraft trials tell of trips made to St Gellért Hill, e.g., by men whom some witch changed into horses. Instrumental in this was certainly the fact that the sacral function of St Gellért Hill had become ambiguous already in the Middle Ages, since it had been the tool of killing a holy man, and the Turks' religious hero-worship during Turkish occupation had imparted an expressly devilish reputation to the hill.

In the Middle Ages these two holy places were still located outside the city but later, as the capital grew around them, they found themselves at the centre. The excavated ruins of the medieval cloister and the Margaret Baths built over thermal springs on Margaret Island remind one of the holy princess. The sacral career of Gellért Hill took another turn early in the 20th century: a suggestive statue of St Gellért was erected on the hillside with a spectacular waterfall at its foot. In 1849 an Austrian fortification was built on the hill towering over the town centre. During the Second World War it was planned to erect here a statue in honour of a new martyr, István Horthy, the Hungarian Regent's son, an air-force officer killed in an air crash. As is commonly known, a smart adaptation of this plan resulted in the erection of the gigantic monument of Liberation which is still towering over the city. It is a huge symbolic female figure holding the palm-branch of peace, with a steely-eyed Soviet

soldier gripping a submachine gun at its feet. "The monument unintentionally continues the previous sacral traditions of the hill." That is how today the statue of Bishop Gerhardus on the hillside looks down on the city, with the political monument towering over it, a grotesque comment on centuries of beliefs and conquests.

Klanczay, Gábor: "A Gellért-hegy és a Margit-sziget—A szentség természeti-térbeli hordozói a középkori Budán" (Gellért Hill and Margaret Island: Natular-spatial manifestations of sanctity in medieval Buda). *Világosság*, 1989, No. 4, pp. 209-217.

Tamás Hofer

Civil society and monolithic state power in a village

Besenyőtelek is a village in Heves County on the northern fringe of the Great Hungarian Plain. The sociologist László Tóth has, since 1983, done field work there, desiring to discover how developed social institutions had been before the Second World War, and how they had been repressed or how they had survived the decades of Stalinism and of—in the author's terms—the "monolithic-Bonapartist" socio-political system. How have they regained strength in the process of democratisation of recent times?

Social communication before 1945 was institutionalised in diverse ways. There functioned, to start with, the traditional institutions of peasant society which regulated various forms of social intercourse according to sex, age, kinship, residence, social and financial standing, occupation and education. This institutional system in Besenyőtelek—by comparison with other villages—was well developed. The author has taken stock of more than a hundred institutions of social communication, including such as men's regular get-togethers on winter evenings in 20 to 30 stables, where usually a well-to-do peasant proprietor acted as host. The tradition of work done in common and of such gatherings has survived collectivisation, although certain kinds of common work have ceased. On the other hand, general poverty has increased interdependence and the role of mutual help. Old past-times have been replaced by new ones, e.g. cooking the evening meal in common, or collective trips. The significance of the festive gatherings for kith and kin, such as weddings has definitely grown. The control function of the village community that had become open and looser owing to industrial employment has slackened and has been practically taken over by relatives. This trend has been strengthened by the new cast system that has come into being since the 1970s.

An interesting quantitative index is the number of benches in front of houses (a general custom

in many villages), where men and women sit and talk on weekday evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays. Those benches numbered 153 in 1930, 159 in 1940, and an all-time low was marked by 108 in 1958, followed by fluctuations with only 108 in 1985 again, but their number rose to 120 by 1988. Similar tendencies are present with regard to changes in the number of artisans' workshops, retail shops and village inns. Their number fell from 78 in 1930 to 41 in 1953 and recovered to 89 by 1988.

Besenyőtelek had also officially functioning organisations for the purpose of moulding political opinion, and even for exercising pressure on state agencies. In the 1930s a local organisation was maintained by the Social Democratic Party as well as by the government party in power. A reading circle had functioned since 1986, a Catholic book-club since 1910, a craftsmen's club and a club of volunteer firemen since 1912, a Catholic young women's and a Catholic young men's club since the 1930s, as well as a farm-hands club since 1938. During the years of coalition government (1945-1949) all four left-wing coalition parties had their local organisations. In the 1950s the Hungarian Working People's Party and its youth organisation, as well as its women's movement, alone survived. The function of a quasi "collective party" was assumed by the Club of Volunteer Firemen, beside which a fairly insignificant part was played from time to time by the sports club and by one or another theatrical venture. From the 1960s onwards, on the other hand, various cultural societies and the club of old-age pensioners already played some part in the formation of public opinion. At the time the village meetings, the pre-election meetings for the nomination of candidates, and the officially arranged report-back meetings of council members have in practice been significant, because informal contacts have already become much more important than those formal-ritual gatherings.

The institutions moulding public opinion and influencing local administration in civil society—even though in an ambiguous way as was usual in East Central Europe—were pretty well developed structurally before the Second World War. They could not be liquidated during the decades of the monolithic society. They continued functioning even when repressed, and they revived in the recent past.

The analysis of decisions at village level and of matters concerning public opinion demonstrates how well, in the years 1974-1984, the village people were informed and how their opinions could find expression in local decisions. According to an improvised statistical table, public opinion carried weight in about 65 per cent of the cases which can be explained by the fact that the council executive had tried informally to gather information on the views of local inhabitants. At the council meetings the competent officials gave 50 per cent positive

answers to questions. The relatively large number of negative answers led to resignation and bolstered opposition to the council executive.

Many concrete cases of opposition to council decisions can be mentioned. People satisfied their own needs, so to speak, by illegal means. Local people built a bus stop by themselves in spite of official prohibition, transferred the open-air market back to the village centre, and the council did not dare to intervene, etc. The election of party secretaries in 1984 (when the official candidate was defeated, while a woman invited from outside and a local man were elected) and the council election in 1985 (when 13 new members were elected to the 25

strong council) demonstrated the strength of civil society in the conduct of political affairs. When at the election of council members two candidates were at last nominated for each post, the result expressed not so much the electors' confidence in the new members, rather their distrust of the old members of the council. In the 1960s, according to the author, the scope of action of autonomous organisations was extended and is now taking over newer fields.

Tóth, László: "A bomlás virágai egy magyarországi faluban." (The Flowers of Decomposition in a Hungarian Village). *Valóság*, 1989, No. 4, pp. 59—67.

T. H.



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